MAY 1965

FIFTY CENTS

MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

VOL. 17

1

THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT IN GUATEMALA

ADOLFO GILLY

A Letter from Prison WILLIAM McADOO

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MONTHLY REVIEW: Published monthly except July and August when bimonthly, and copyright ©1965, by Monthly Review, Inc. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS: 333 Sixth Avenue, New York, New York 10014.
Telephone: CHelsea 2-6494.
Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTOR: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: One year—$6 in the U.S.; $7 foreign.
By 1st class mail—U.S. $9; elsewhere $11.
By air mail—No. America $11; So. America and Europe $15; Asia (incl. USSR), Africa, Australia $17.

EDITORS: Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

If you don't already know it, mark well the name of Frantz Fanon who has become perhaps the most revered spokesman for the colonial oppressed. His justly famous book *Les Damnés de la Terre* has just been issued by Grove Press under the title of *The Wretched of the Earth* (see advertisement, p. 64), and we recommend it highly. It is a book we would have liked to publish, but Grove Press got it before we did.

MR Press, however, succeeded in obtaining the rights for two other Fanon books which we hope to publish in the fall. The first, entitled *Studies in a Dying Colonialism,* will have an introduction by Adolfo Gilly, author of "The Guerrilla Movement in Guatemala" in this issue of MR. We chose Gilly to write the introduction because he told us that, in his opinion, our Fanon book was even more important than the better-known Grove Press work. We asked him to tell in his introduction why he thinks *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* is so significant. The book will be published at $4.95, but the prepublication price is only $3.50 (see back cover for further details).

The second Fanon book, entitled *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays,* is being translated now and should be off the press this winter. Further details to follow.

The latest book by Danilo Dolci, the Italian author and sociologist described by Aldous Huxley as "the ideal twentieth century saint" because of his renowned work among the poor of Western Sicily, is tentatively scheduled for publication by MR Press on September 1. It is entitled *A New World in the Making* and will be listed at $7.50. The prepublication price is $5, and we urge you to order now.

Other MR Press books scheduled for publication this year:

(1) *Monopoly Capitalism* by Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy. This long-awaited work is an extended treatment of the generation and ab-

(*continued on inside back cover*)

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THE BREAKTHROUGH IN GUATEMALA

In this and the June issues of MR we are privileged to present to the world for the first time the real story of the guerrilla movement in Guatemala. The reporting, consisting of a long two-part article and a number of interviews, is by Adolfo Gilly who spent several weeks during January and February in the Guatemalan mountains, and whom MR readers will remember as the author of *Inside the Cuban Revolution* (the October, 1964, issue of the magazine, also published separately as an MR Press book).

Though Gilly's work speaks for itself and needs no praise from us, we cannot let pass the opportunity to express to him our congratulations and thanks for a superb job of political reporting. Like Herbert Matthews' stories from the Sierra Maestra in 1957, these pieces must be rated an historic scoop. But they are much more than that: Gilly has given us political analysis of the highest order, something which few, if any, newspapermen in the United States are equipped to provide or, if they were, would be allowed to publish.

In other respects, too, Gilly's scoop is of an essentially different kind from Matthews'. The latter established for the first time that there was a well-organized and powerful guerrilla movement operating in the mountains of eastern Cuba. It is true that Gilly has given us a far more detailed account of the Guatemalan guerrilla movement than any previous reporter; but the fact of its existence has been known for some time, and guerrillas are not so rare today as they were in 1957. What makes Gilly's work so important is that it reveals for the first time the real nature and political content of the Guatemalan guerrilla movement and points clearly to its profound implications for the Latin American and world revolutions.

The Guatemalan guerrillas have challenged one of the

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most widely accepted of all the dogmas of left-wing and progressive political thought—that the only kind of revolution which can hope to succeed in underdeveloped countries is one based on a coalition of class forces including the petty bourgeoisie and the so-called national bourgeoisie. The Guatemalan guerrillas have been led by their own experience to reject this dogma. They have instead adopted a straightforward socialist program and have declared that the means to its realization must be a workers' and peasants' state. And—momentous fact—they have proved that this strategy, far from isolating them from the masses, as the ideologues of the Left had predicted, has met with resounding and cumulative political success. When this becomes widely known, as it certainly will beginning with the publication of Gilly's reports in the Spanish and English editions of MONTHLY REVIEW, it seems inevitable that it will hit the whole Latin American Left with the force of an earthquake—an earthquake, moreover, which will send out powerful tremors to other parts of the world as well.

How can we account for the fact that the supposedly suicidal course of proclaiming a socialist program and fighting for a workers' and peasants' state has in reality infused vitality and strength into the Guatemalan revolution, guided its activities into new and creative channels, and opened up boundless perspectives for its future development? Answering this question is more than a matter of satisfying a legitimate curiosity; what is at stake is nothing less than the relevance and applicability of Guatemalan experience to other regions and countries. Is Guatemala unique? Or does it point out the correct road for others to follow?

In one respect, undoubtedly, Guatemala *is* unique. It is the only Latin American country whose recent experience—that is, within the memory of most living adults—includes a revolution based on a coalition of classes.* The reforms of the Arévalo-

* To refresh memories: The tyrant-dictator Jorge Ubico was overthrown by a student-led revolution in 1944. In an ensuing election, Juan José Arévalo, a university professor returned from a teaching post in Argentina, was elected President and proceeded to institute a series of New Deal-like reforms, including labor legislation legalizing unions, setting minimum wages, etc. In 1950 when his term came to an end, his War

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Arbenz period did not go very far, but they did bring certain benefits to the masses and gave a foretaste of more to come. They were cut short by brutal foreign intervention, aided and abetted by the army and without any serious effort being made to defend the revolutionary regime. From this experience, the workers and peasants learned a profound political lesson: never to trust any government, no matter how well intentioned, to go down the line for them unless it is their own. "It wasn't we who were in the government," Gilly quotes a peasant as saying. "It was Colonel Arbenz who was merely a friend of ours." Understanding this, the Guatemalan masses could hardly be expected to respond to an invitation to be the fighters for, but not the masters of, another such regime. Their enthusiasm for the goal of a workers' and peasants' state is therefore easy to understand.

But what about socialism—or communism, as it is sure to be labelled by the counter-revolutionaries, foreign and domestic? For one thing, the end of Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union, the example of the Cubans, the loosening of the ties within the socialist bloc, have combined to deprive anti-communism of much of its one-time potency as a political weapon. But more important is the fact that socialism is the only possible program for a workers' and peasants' state. What else should such a state be for? Capitalism? A few reforms which would leave the class structure unchanged? These questions carry their own answers. The truth, which workers and peasants seem to be able to

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Minister, Colonel Jacob Arbenz, ran against Arévalo on a platform promising land reform and was elected with overwhelming peasant support. He made good on his promises, expropriating large tracts of land from United Fruit in the process, and followed through on other reforms as well. But Arbenz's program remained strictly within the confines of capitalism, and allegations that his regime was Communist were completely without foundation (the Communists had only four deputies out of a total of 54). Nevertheless, the United States, rushing to the defense of United Fruit and sensing in the developing Guatemalan revolution a much wider threat to its imperialist interests, organized and armed an invasion by dissident army officers under the leadership of Castillo Armas. After a few days' hesitation, Arbenz's generals deserted him, forcing his resignation and exile and installing in power once again an old-style reactionary dictatorship. For basic data on Guatemala's geography and population, see the Appendix to Gilly's article, page 39 below.

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understand much more readily than doctors of philosophy, is that to go all the way politically and only part of the way economically makes no sense. Wealth and privilege go hand in hand with power. To take power away from an oligarchy while leaving intact the foundation of its wealth and privilege—that is, its private property—is simply to guarantee the continuous fomentation of counter-revolution and civil war. Except for a brief transitional period, a workers' and peasants' state without socialism is a flat contradiction in terms.* Therefore the best indication of the Guatemalan masses' political maturity, itself the product of a long and rich historical experience, is that they respond with enthusiasm to a socialist program: in the fullest sense of the word, it is *their* program.

And what about other Latin American countries? Is Guatemala's history so exceptional that the revolutionary strategy which is producing such good results there has little or no relevance elsewhere?

We do not believe it for a moment.

For one thing, it was not only Guatemalans who drew the lesson of the Arbenz debacle. All Latin America was watching, and the impact on the consciousness of the masses was profound. Armies are guardians of the status quo; they respond to the interests of domestic and foreign property-owners: there can hardly be many Latin Americans of any political persuasion who are still ignorant of these basic facts.

And then there was, and is, Cuba. Fidel Castro and his comrades learned the lesson of Guatemala, and they went one step further and applied their knowledge. They completely liquidated the old army and put in its place a workers' and peasants' army—a decisive step in creating a workers' and peasants' state. And it worked. But Cuba proved more than that; it also proved that a workers' and peasants' state cannot long preside over a capitalist society. The conflict is absolute and irreconcilable—one or the other must go. In Cuba it was

* There is no implication that a workers' and peasants' state cannot retain elements of private property even for a long time. What is crucial is that they should be subordinate to the socialist economy and kept under strict control.

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capitalism that went and socialism that took its place (even though for a long time the leaders of the Cuban Revolution themselves were unable or unwilling to call it by its name).

Finally, there have been many other experiences during the past few years which have helped to shape a new consciousness in the Latin American masses: the phony reformism of the Alliance for Progress; a series of military coups against governments much less progressive than Arbenz's; an actual deterioration of living standards for all but a small minority; the defeats suffered by North American imperialism in Vietnam; the emergence of social, as distinct from merely political, revolutionary forces in Africa; the loud and clear call from Red China for international revolutionary solidarity—these and many other smaller-scale events have been pushing the Latin American masses onto the historical stage, pointing the way to solutions of their problems, teaching them who are their friends and who their enemies.

From all this we draw the conclusion that while Guatemala has had experiences different from those of other Latin American countries and the level of political maturity may well be higher there than elsewhere, there is no reason to assume that the Guatemalan masses see things in a qualitatively different way than their brothers in Central and South America. The revolutionary movement in Guatemala has had the clear-sightedness and the courage to take the lead in adopting a frankly socialist program, but there is no reason to believe that its impact will be limited by national, or even continental, boundaries.

We are not of course suggesting that the Latin American masses are generally imbued with a socialist consciousness or are clear about the necessity of a workers' and peasants' state. But the Guatemalan experience does show that the more advanced elements have become completely disillusioned with reformism and are now receptive to the revolutionary socialist message. As awareness of this receptiveness spreads, wholly new perspectives will open up for the Latin American revolution.

At the same time, one must not neglect the obstacles which are blocking or slowing down progress, the most important being the fossilized mentalities and organizational vested in-

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terests of the traditional left-wing leadership groups, especially those entrenched in control of the Moscow-oriented Communist Parties. These people, though claiming to be Marxist-Leninists, have long since forgotten the theory of state and revolution, and they have shown themselves incapable of learning anything new from the rich experiences of the postwar years. Cuba and Guatemala have proved, each in its own way, the necessity of a new leadership unswayed by dogma, unafraid of ideological intimidation, and ready to learn both from the great revolutionaries of the past and from the historical reality which surrounds them. But such leadership does not spring into the world full blown or overnight. It must make its way in constant controversy and conflict, often against seemingly insuperable odds. Even under the inspiration of a genius like Fidel Castro, it took years for the new Cuban leadership to take shape and find the right course. And Gilly's report from Guatemala shows that the struggle there for a new leadership has also been arduous and no doubt is still continuing. The same will almost certainly be true of all the other countries which still lag behind.

It must be immediately added, however, that the process of new leadership formation has an inherent tendency to speed up as breakthroughs are scored in one country after another. The Guatemalan revolutionary leadership both learned much from the Cubans and rapidly went beyond Cuban theory and practice at a comparable stage of the two revolutions. It is enough to juxtapose Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* with Gilly's report from Guatemala to understand that the whole conception of guerrilla war has undergone a decisive change in five short years. In Guevara's view (as of late 1959), the function of the peasants was to support and aid the guerrilla army which would gradually build up its strength to the point where it could challenge and defeat the regular army. After the climactic battles, the guerrillas would install a new government which would then bring the benefits of basic reforms to the peasantry. This is essentially a paternalistic conception which locates initiative, revolutionary drive, and ultimately responsibility in a guerrilla elite. The Guatemalan view in a sense is the inverse of this. The function of the guerrillas is seen as that of organizing the peasants and becoming their revolutionary in-

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strument. The corresponding strategy puts more emphasis on the political—on breaking up the existing state power—than on the military. The climax of the revolution is seen not as a series of pitched battles but rather as an armed insurrection, with the action of the guerrillas in the countryside being closely co-ordinated with that of workers and students in the cities and towns. Out of this would emerge *from the outset* a workers' and peasants' state based directly on the workers' and peasants' committees organized and developed during the preceding stages. This is evidently a profoundly revolutionary *and* democratic conception.

What the Guatemalans are doing is rediscovering through their own experience and adapting to their own conditions ideas and methods developed during the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the Chinese Revolution. The peasant organizations which Gilly describes are obvious counterparts of the original Soviets, and there is no reason to doubt that similar organizational forms will in due course be developed among workers and soldiers. As to similarities to China, it is sufficient to quote a typical passage from the writings of Mao Tse-tung:

> They [mistaken comrades] think that the task of the Red Army, like that of the White Army, is merely to fight. They do not understand that the Chinese Red Army is an armed body for carrying out the political tasks of the revolution. Especially at present [1929], the Red Army should certainly not confine itself to fighting; besides fighting to destroy the enemy's military strength, it should shoulder such important tasks as doing propaganda among the masses, organizing the masses, arming them, helping them to establish revolutionary political power and setting up Party organizations. . . . Without these objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army loses the reason for its existence. ("On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," 1929, in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung,* Peking, 1963, p. 52.)

That such ideas and organizational methods have great and immediate relevance to large parts of Latin America seems obvious. And indeed signs are not lacking that they are already making their appearance elsewhere. For example, Eduardo Vicente, a Venezuelan student writing in the latest (Winter, 1965) issue of *Studies on the Left,* points out that much of the early program of the Venezuelan Armed Forces of National

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Liberation (FALN) was taken over from the Venezuelan Communist Party and had as its central aim a "democratic and patriotic government," which Vicente quite rightly calls a "relic of a sterile past." His concluding words are worth quoting in full:

> One last word concerning the guerrilla fronts. Here, the questions of the daily struggle rapidly take political forms of a fundamental nature. For example, on the slogan of "democratic and patriotic government" as the FALN's goal, guerrillas in one of the fronts have already raised objections to this line as misleading for the people, who have heard the same promises for decades. Some are calling for a position which clearly explains that *only* through a *socialist* revolution can Venezuela ever achieve a "democratic and patriotic" government. This fact is indicative of the direction in which the FALN is headed politically and the Venezuelan revolution with it.

Is this not precisely the direction in which the Guatemalan guerrilla movement has been travelling for well over a year? Whether there has been any communication between the Venezuelans and Guatemala we do not know, but in any case who can doubt that when they know the whole Guatemalan story they will be confirmed in the rightness of their new direction and emboldened to move forward with renewed energy and determination?

The Latin American and world revolutionary movements owe a great debt of gratitude to the Guatemalan guerrillas. Not only have they fought bravely and well in the best revolutionary tradition. Above all they have had the moral and intellectual courage—a rarer quality than physical courage—to reject accepted dogmas and defy "higher authority" by fighting openly and proudly for a *socialist* revolution.

Next month we plan to discuss the implications of the Guatemalan breakthrough for the socialist movement in advanced capitalist countries, and especially in the United States.

(April 10, 1965)

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THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT IN GUATEMALA

BY ADOLFO GILLY

I. With a Guerrilla Patrol

As dusk fell, the guerrilla patrol halted its march across the mountain. We removed our shoulder packs and put up hammocks. We opened some cans of food, while *tortillas* were heated over the open fire. A *compañero* tuned in Radio Havana. It was 6 p.m. Maybe there was still daylight beyond the thickly wooded mountain slope where we had pitched our camp, but all we could see were each other's faces in the glow of the fire. After the newscast, as on every other night, there was a political discussion, with participation by the entire patrol.

Was it true that in 1954 the workers and peasants throughout Guatemala called for arms with which to defend the Arbenz government against the "liberationist" coup organized by the State Department? Or did they simply wait for the army to smash the coup? And to what extent did Arbenz institute agrarian reforms? Was good land distributed? Did the entire peasantry benefit, or only a sector of it?

One of the *guerrilleros* put the questions that night, and each one gave his answer and related his own experience or that of his family during the period in question. The guerrilla patrol, led by Commander Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, national director of the Revolutionary Movement of November 13th (MR-13), was made up of peasants, and others of urban or military background. Each one gave an answer that flowed out of his own experience; some insisted that the people had demanded arms; others reported the reactions of the military group that had been close to Arbenz at the time of the crisis.

The following afternoon, the patrol encamped near a

The translation is by Bobbye Ortiz.

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peasant's hut; that night we had freshly made tortillas, hot coffee, and roasted bananas. Each member of the family expressed in his own way his welcome to the *guerrilleros,* one of whom explained the program of the Movement, telling of its most recent struggles and its perspectives and how all peasants could participate in this struggle, not only by collaborating with the guerrilla groups but by organizing among themselves. The conversation, as usually happens in political discussions with Guatemalan peasants, veered to the experiences of the Arbenz epoch.

"The land over there," said the peasant, pointing, "was distributed. Then came the 'liberation' and it was taken away from us. The land over there," he pointed in another direction, "they didn't distribute. It's the best land, belonging to rich people, so it wasn't touched."

In the days to come, conversations with other peasants during the guerrilla march, or in the evening camp talks, rounded out the answers to all the questions.

That evening another peasant told us: "In my village we got together and demanded arms from the government. They promised to give them to us, but they gave us nothing."

Someone else said: "I was working in Tiquisate at the time. Government representatives came to us, at the time of the Castillo Armas uprising [against Arbenz], and asked our leaders if, among the six *fincas* [farms] we were working on, we could gather 300 men, who would then be armed. We told them yes. We each returned to our *finca,* and when we called for 50 volunteers from each one, the peasants were angry and told us that they were all volunteers; the next day, instead of 300 there were three thousand men assembled, waiting for arms. But the government representatives never came, and then the Arbenz government collapsed."

A peasant stopped his work in the field, as he watched our guerrilla column approach. "I'd heard that you people were in the area, but I'd never actually seen guerrillas before," he said contentedly. "You have arms and that's good. You can't fight with nothing but machetes for weapons. In the time of *don Jacobo* [Arbenz], we all got together and asked for arms, but they didn't give us any, and that finished him off. If the

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peasants had been armed, no one could have overthrown him." As he said goodbye to us he added, "One of these days I might pick up my gun and join you in the mountains. Take care of yourselves." And he went on plowing his land, a small and rocky plot of ground on the mountainside, which he had cleared—*descombrado,* they say in Guatemala—with his own hands.

A formal roundtable discussion, taking place somewhere far from the struggle, on the question of whether or not the people had demanded arms in 1954, might go unresolved for weeks; but here in the mountains the peasants answered the question without the slightest hesitation—just as the Guatemalan workers, together with hundreds of students and white-collar workers, who went in bus and truckloads to the barracks in those crucial June days of 1954 to ask for arms with which to defend the Guatemalan revolution, would have solved the question in reality.

The Guatemalan *guerrilleros* of MR-13 fight today for the socialist revolution and for a government of workers and peasants. Neither the method nor the program was drawn up by a group of pure theoreticians, as a kind of parlor game. If, for the first time in Latin America, a guerrilla movement has sprung up in Guatemala that openly declares its socialist objectives, this is without doubt due to the influence of the world revolutionary process and the Cuban socialist revolution. But it is also due—especially due—to the deep collective experience of the Guatemalan people, to the defeat suffered in 1954, and to the fact that, since then, workers and peasants, instead of lapsing into resignation or retreat, have gone on fighting as best they can. They have maintained a permanent state of unrest under the subsequent dictatorships, and they have extracted a series of conclusions from the 1954 defeat at the hands of the counter-revolution.

The first of these conclusions is that the counter-revolution triumphed because the people were not armed. The second, that the government did not arm the people because it relied on the army to defend the revolution. "It wasn't we who were in the government; it was Colonel Arbenz, who was merely a friend of ours," a peasant told us. An armed people and power directly exercised by the masses: out of the Arbenz

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experience the Guatemalan masses have drawn up this essential program for the socialist revolution, even though they may not use these words.

The peasant who had said to us, "You have arms and that's good," expressed a common conviction and a growing decision: "One of these days I might pick up my gun and join you in the mountains."

The electoral path is barred in Guatemala not only because the bourgeoisie cannot provide democratic elections and continue to remain in power. It is also barred because the workers and peasants do not believe in elections; they have no illusions about elections. The electoral experience was thoroughly explored with Arbenz and it failed. For this reason, armed revolution has won support. An additional and important reason is that the peasants now, after thinking through the Arbenz fiasco, are firmly convinced that it is not enough to have the land; it is also necessary to have a government and the arms with which to defend it. It is not enough simply to ask for arms; they must first possess them and organize, gun in hand. Peasant organization and arms, arms and peasant organization, are for them two inseparable and equally necessary elements. In Guatemala there is no need to convince the peasantry of these facts; all that is necessary is to propose forms and methods for their achievement. It is for the fulfillment of this task that the guerrilla forces of MR-13 march through the mountains, fighting and organizing.

Its program—a government of workers and peasants, based on a people armed and organized in committees, unions, and communes—meets with immense response because it defends itself with arms and because it is based on the indelible, collective, and conclusive experience of the masses at all earlier stages, one of the most profound and richest experiences of all Latin America. The State Department and its agents can overthrow Arbenz, they can persecute, torture, and kill. But they cannot obliterate this experience from the consciousness of the Guatemalan people. Today they are rising, arms in hand, in the socialist guerrilla army of the Sierra de las Minas [mountain range north of Guatemala City].

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II. The Revolutionary Movement of November 13th

MR-13 grew out of a nationalist military plot, which culminated in an uprising in 1960. The plot, which had been set in motion early in the year, was completely devoid of socialist ideas. The aim was to "clean up" the government, not to destroy capitalism. The Ydígoras administration, which had risen to power as a result of the electoral fraud of 1958, not only devoted itself to the defense of imperialism and the *latifundistas* [owners of large landholdings] but also lined its pockets with national treasury funds.

These were factors of primary importance in the program uniting the military conspirators. They did not, however, provide the only force motivating their activities; the movement also raised a nationalist and anti-imperialist banner. It was the movement's intention to prevent Guatemala's utilization as the base for aggression against Cuba, as planned by the United States. Since early 1960, mercenaries were being trained at the *finca* Helvetia de Retalhuleu for the ill-fated landing at the Bay of Pigs. The exposé of the training activities provoked the military uprising of November 13, which had the effect of postponing the invasion, thus helping to assure Cuba's self-defense.

The plot not only had no contact with imperialism or its agents, but it was, in effect, linked from its inception with a socialist revolution, even though its leaders did not know it or intend it. It is a fact that at that time Cuba had not yet declared itself to be socialist, even though it had, since August, nationalized property extensively—steps which had, by October 1960, converted it into a workers' state. It is also true that the Guatemalan military men who were preparing the uprising saw only the nationalist and anti-imperialist aspects of the Cuban Revolution. But, quite aside from the participants' interpretations of the realities of the day, their path was consistently free of imperialist influence, approaching more closely that of the Cuban Revolution, even though only a few of the original group stayed on the path to its end.

Of the 150 leaders and officers who were sworn members of the secret group, only 45 revolted on November 13, 1960. One group among them captured staff headquarters in the

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capital, provided themselves with arms and supplies, and headed for the military zone of Zacapa. On their arrival there, 800 peasants presented themselves at the Zacapa barracks and asked for arms with which to fight against the government. This was not in the program, nor was it even anticipated by the rebels, who could not make up their minds to arm the peasants; nor were they able to find the means by which to link the military movement with the people. Nonetheless, this action by the peasants demonstrated how great were the possibilities of transforming the military conspiracy into a popular uprising.

Without clear objectives, with a limited program, not knowing what to do or where to advance when the government did not fall forthwith, the military coup collapsed. The fact that a substantial number of the conspirators had defected at the last moment was only one of the causes of the fiasco. In a document published on the fourth anniversary of the uprising, MR-13 leaders pointed to the explanation:

> It was the very limited scope of the movement's political orientation that caused its military downfall; having a huge arsenal and a military zone under its control signified nothing, so long as the military leaders did not understand clearly why they were fighting, toward what goal they were moving.

The rebels scattered; some went into exile in El Salvador and Honduras; one group subsequently accepted the government's amnesty terms and gave up the struggle. Another sector, headed by Alejandro de León and Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, contended that the struggle must continue and that the problems of Guatemala could be resolved only with arms.

Meanwhile the peasantry, unorganized, without conscious goals, was exercising its influence on the rebel officers, through thousands of isolated actions. Each episode may seem to be an isolated one, but in their totality they revealed how the collective will of the peasants, their willingness to provide protection, their solidarity, won the officers to their cause.

Lieutenant-Colonel Augusto Vicente Loarca, an MR-13 leader, told me as we marched through the Sierra de las Minas:

> I had to escape from Zacapa with a sergeant and a soldier. They were searching for us on land and with planes. The peasants helped us to hide, to ford rivers, to keep moving. At a certain

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point, I told my two *compañeros* to return to their army units, in order not to go down on army records as rebels. They had not been exposed as rebels, and there was no need for them to share my fate. I was, by then, out of immediate reach of the army and relatively safe. They returned and I stayed on with a peasant who offered to hide me. I didn't actually live in his hut, so as not to compromise him, but in a little patch of woods nearby. The peasant came twice a day to talk with me and bring me food. It was clear that he was feeding me at great sacrifice, that he was bringing me food that was, however simple, much better than he could afford. I couldn't convince him to do otherwise. He even brought me *aguardiente* [a cheap alcoholic beverage made of sugar cane] in the mornings, to warm me up after the cold of the night. By protecting a rebel he was running a serious risk, but he dismissed this casually, even though I was a stranger to him. With his help I was able to send a message to the city and arrange a hiding place; this made it possible for me to return to the city. When we said good-bye, I told him how deeply grateful I was for all he'd done for me, a stranger, because I was a rebel against the government. He said it was nothing and that he had only one favor to ask of me: "If you and your people win, please remember this village when you're in the government, and see what you can do to get us a school." I asked him if there was anything else he wanted and he said no, that was all.

Alejandro de León was hidden and protected by another peasant who, seeing him on the run, realized that he was a rebel officer and offered him refuge. It was raining that night and there was no food in the house. At one point the peasant began hacking away at some of the wooden wallboards of his hut. "It's to make a fire with. I don't have any dry wood and you're soaking wet. I can fix the wall tomorrow."

Yon Sosa and a group of rebels crossed the Honduran border. They presented themselves to the police in the first village they reached and asked for political asylum. They were held until instructions could be sent by the Honduran government. Soon, peasants began arriving to see the prisoners, to bring them food, to offer them blankets, to talk with them. They knew only that these were Guatemalan rebels; this being the case, they must be good people.

Luis A. Turcios, currently a guerrilla commander, had the same kind of experience when he, together with other rebels, crossed into El Salvador. He asked for asylum and was detained

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at a frontier military barracks. Soon after, he bought five centavos' worth of tortillas from an old peasant woman. Later, she came back; without a word, she returned his five centavos.

The Salvadorean peasants began gathering to see the rebels, and there was much coming and going through the barracks gates. They brought food and blankets, and even took up a collection of five- and ten-centavo pieces. None of the peasants knew the prisoners personally; they only knew them to be Guatemalan rebels, fleeing from repression. And, to understand the import of the peasants' action, the reader should pause to realize how much five or ten centavos mean to such peasants.

There were no facilities for holding organized discussions and making decisions; but in Guatemala, as in Honduras, and El Salvador, all the peasants helped and protected the rebels, tried to influence them and win them to their side. The peasants' motive was not only to offer their solidarity but also to win allies and leaders in their struggle for the land. The peasantry has done this with many rebel fighters, over and over again; they have been doing it for years, for centuries. Many of the rebels did not respond, but the effort was not in vain; the influence was felt by some, although not immediately. Yon Sosa and Alejandro de León and their *compañeros* did not jump to conclusions; but, little by little, the peasants won them over.

The military group that remained united after the failure of the uprising returned to Guatemala and made contact with several opposition parties. They continued to operate secretly, but this time they had no links with the army and no intention of repeating their earlier experience. The various bourgeois and petty bourgeois opposition parties, continually involved in real or imaginary clandestine activities, commanded their attention for a few months. Their dealings with these groups were eventually to prove to be blind alleys. It was during this period that one of the movement leaders, Alejandro de León, was hunted down and murdered by the police.

In December, 1961, a group of peasants sought out MR-13 leaders. They placed their problems before them and offered peasant support, provided MR-13 would begin an armed struggle for the land. The shock produced by the death of Alejandro

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de León and the initiative taken by the peasants acted as powerful stimuli in leading the movement to put an end to its negotiations with the opposition parties and to decide to launch guerrilla warfare. Once again the peasant class had pressured, influenced, and pulled along with it the military men of the *Movimiento,* toward a higher stage in the struggle.

In February, 1962, under the name of *Movimiento Guerrillero Alejandro de León 13 de Noviembre,* Yon Sosa's forces began the struggle in the mountains of Izabal, in the Sierra de las Minas.

In March and April of the same year, popular discontent with the Ydígoras government broke out in Guatemala City; there was a rash of demonstrations, clashes with the police, barricades in the streets. The actions were led by the students and their organization, the *Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios* (AEU). The students had the sympathy and moral support of the population, but their leadership did not possess sufficient social authority; above all, they had no clear program, such as could attract the interest and active participation of the majority of the peasants and workers. The struggle, with its continual street clashes over a period of two months, revealed the government's weakness, its total lack of social base, and the revolutionary situation that prevailed. But leadership and organization were required if advances were to be consolidated; it was the lack of these elements that finally made it possible for the government to regain control.

At this juncture MR-13 approached the *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* (PGT, the Communist Party of Guatemala, founded in 1949), and the *Movimiento Abril 12* (April 12th Movement), a student group organized during the events of March and April, but today virtually disbanded. Together they formed a front to further armed struggle, the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (FAR). This led to new alignments and to the withdrawal of certain elements, who did not wish to continue on the revolutionary path.

The FAR was a key stage in the development of the present guerrilla leadership. Its program was provided by the PGT; the goal was not a socialist revolution, nor a workers' and peasants' government. It called for a national democratic revolution that

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would carry to power a bloc of four classes: workers, peasants, national bourgeoisie, and petty bourgeoisie. The program of the government would be based on industrialization and development of Guatemala within a capitalist framework; certain measures would be taken against imperialism while preserving the property, social position, and participation in the government of the national bourgeoisie.

According to this conception, the FAR's role was merely executive. It was a "mailed fist," while political direction remained in the hands of the *Frente Unido de Resistencia* (FUR), organized by the PGT and other groups, in which MR-13—the guerrillas—were not represented.

Lacking a program of their own, adhering only to the idea that there was no way out but armed struggle, the men of MR-13 were obliged to accept this division of labor in which their armed struggle was carried out under outside political leadership, in whose decisions they had no direct participation.

But inside FAR the same contradiction that had earlier led MR-13 to break with the bourgeois opposition groups was at work. The FUR leadership always kept open the possibility and the hope of eventual negotiation leading to a shift from armed to electoral struggle. The guerrilla actions which MR-13 planned to carry out were considered by FUR to be, not a means of toppling the system, but an instrument of pressure which could force the government to negotiate and yield on the electoral, democratic level.

Meanwhile, the leadership of MR-13, having taken the armed struggle into the mountains, was—in spite of vicissitudes, dilemmas, and impasses—under continuous pressure from the peasant masses. Guerrilla warfare, fighting with arms in hand and side by side with the peasants, had its own logic. While the political leadership of FUR, committed to democratic negotiations, moved in the direction of conciliation, the leadership of the armed struggle moved in a revolutionary direction. The *guerrillero* who is fighting alongside the peasant masses, who sees poverty and exploitation on all sides, who is under constant pressure from the peasantry to advance—receiving meanwhile its solidarity and support, its endless demonstrations of revolutionary dedication—is not inclined to negotiation but

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to struggle. And he feels that negotiation and the program that exalts it as a goal are constant brakes on his initiative.

This explains the constant friction within the FAR, which led to its virtual paralysis. The crisis persisted throughout 1962-1963. The guerrilla force felt that it was falling apart, relegated as it was to a role subordinate to negotiations with and conciliation of the bourgeoisie, hampered by the electoral illusions of FUR, paralyzed by prospects of a "truce" which the government—*sub rosa*—held out from time to time, in an effort to bolster its position through skillful exploitation of legalist illusions concerning democratic national revolution. Seeds of disintegration appeared; internal struggles served to nurture them. Most important, the movement was not progressing; it had won no successes among the masses; it was unable to break out of the vicious circle of high-level politics.

The revolutionary process in other parts of the world helped bring the crisis to a head. From the beginning, there had been the influence of socialist Cuba. This period witnessed the missile crisis, the development of the Sino-Soviet conflict, the extension of discussion in the world revolutionary movement on peaceful coexistence versus revolution; new advances were being made in the revolutionary movements of Vietnam, Algeria, Zanzibar, and the Congo; and there was the Brazilian experience, culminating in the fall of Goulart early in 1964.

It was in this atmosphere that the leadership of MR-13 underwent a period of internal transformation. From a nationalist and anti-imperialist orientation, it moved to an acceptance of Marxism as a method of analysis and action, and socialism as the goal of the struggle. From the concept of anti-feudal, democratic revolution, it moved to a program of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist revolution, of socialist revolution and, following the path of the socialist revolutions of China and Cuba, of a government of workers and peasants as the goal of the revolutionary struggle. This transformation opened new horizons for the guerrilla struggle, which had reached a dead end; it opened the way for organization of the masses; at the same time it transformed the conception of the guerrilla force's own role and its relation to the masses.

It was at this juncture that the movement adopted its

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present name: *Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre* (MR-13). By the middle of 1964 it had begun to publish its own newspaper, *Revolución Socialista*. Program and newspaper have served to give the movement its present lineaments and to strengthen its political and organizational independence. Such is the organization that leads the guerrilla struggle in Guatemala today.

III. Armed Propaganda

"Our struggle is not primarily military but social," Commander Yon Sosa told me in one of our conversations in the *sierra*. "It's not our intention to destroy the government by military means; we intend to dissolve it through social action. This means that at the same time we must be organizing the bases of the government that will replace the old one, a government of workers and peasants. Our guerrilla force organizes on the social level. True, we fight with arms in hand, but we also organize the peasant masses and the city workers. They are the ones who'll topple the capitalist dictatorship."

The principal task of the Guatemalan guerrilla force today is peasant organization; all military actions are subordinate to it. When a guerrilla squad goes marching through the mountains, its machine guns, rifles, and grenades are not its principal weapons of struggle; these are necessary, indispensable, providing the basis of security. But the principal weapon is the word—written and spoken, especially spoken.

During the weeks we spent in the mountains, the guerrilla patrol with which I was marching—one of several, covering various zones of Northeast Guatemala—had no encounter with the army. Such was not the intention; it didn't enter into our plans. The patrol knew at all times where the army was, which mountain passes and trails it used, and when it used them. This information was volunteered by the peasants. Thus the guerrillas were always able to avoid a clash when they chose to do so.

At the same time, their lengthy talks with the peasants enabled them to confirm organizational progress in zones where guerrilla forces had passed, weeks or months earlier. In other areas they spoke with peasants who were seeing *guerrilleros* for

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the first time. And everywhere, they listened to denunciations of repressive acts by landowners and the military. Wherever they were, they constantly spread their revolutionary message; its key word was "organize."

Such were the tasks of the guerrilla patrols. The number of their members varied according to need and the probability of armed clashes. A large number was not necessary, except in certain cases of planned military actions.

The patrol would enter a village, knowing in advance whether the army had been there recently, and if and when it had gone. This knowledge was provided not only by the peasants, but also by the unmistakable clues left by the army itself. Our patrol sometimes spent many days following the trail of an army detachment, verifying its route and where it had halted, and where it had altered its course. Each detail that was deduced from physical evidence would later be confirmed and enlarged upon by the local peasants.

Once the patrol reached a village it would assemble the peasants. If it were a first visit the patrol would explain what it was struggling for. After several years of guerrilla activity, most peasants would already be aware, at least, of their existence, and would have heard about them from other peasants. But they often don't know just what it is the guerrillas want and are attempting to do. The army and the government have carried on extensive propaganda in which the guerrillas are portrayed as bandits, cattle thieves, and highway robbers. A first encounter between a guerrilla group and a peasant village will often bring to the surface the peasant's deep-rooted suspicion, a defense mechanism of those to whom the outside world has brought nothing but exaction of tribute, exploitation, and repression. But as guerrilla influence spreads, these same peasants undertake to spread the truth, from village to village, about the guerrillas and their objectives.

Our patrol halted one day to talk with a group of peasants. It was the group's first contact with guerrillas, although they had heard that we were in the area. Evaristo Aldana, a leader of MR-13, explained the guerrilla struggle to them in the following terms:

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You have noticed that we have weapons. We have them so that we can struggle against the government and the landowners; against the capitalists that live off the toil of workers and peasants; and against the army which defends them and represses you. We are fighting for the land, so that each peasant shall have the land he tills, so that no peasant shall be obliged to pay rent or taxes to the big landowners. But we alone are not going to win the land. You must take it over, with our assistance. We will help you with our weapons, but you must organize and prepare to take possession of the land. You must prepare well; you must talk to all the peasants in the area. And you must have arms if you are to take the land and defend it. We should organize this undertaking together and launch the attack when we are completely prepared. You surely remember that land was distributed here, during the Arbenz regime; but then came the so-called "liberation" and it was taken away from you.

The peasants nodded assent and Aldana continued:

Therefore, it is not enough for the lands to be given to you; you must have arms to defend them with. Each peasant must have his weapon. Furthermore, we must have a government that will defend us, the workers and peasants, instead of defending the *latifundistas*. We must prepare ourselves, uniting with peasants in other regions and with city workers, if we are to establish our own government. The way things are now, the government controls the army; and the army defends the *latifundistas* and persecutes the peasants. As long as there are *latifundistas* and capitalists in the government, this situation will continue. When the government belongs to the workers and peasants, then it will serve the workers and peasants, and it will prosecute the exploiters. And no "liberationist" will be able to take the land away from us because we will be in the government, and everybody will have a gun to defend his land and government with.

The peasants listened, asked questions, talked about the Arbenz epoch and the subsequent "liberation," and discussed their current problems. They didn't generalize, as Aldana had, but they agreed with what he said, because their own experience confirmed the validity of his words.

Leaflets and pamphlets were distributed. None of them could read, but they told us there was someone in the village who could read them aloud to all of them.

"Now we'll be able to tell the others about you," one of them said to us. "Once a friend told me he had seen some

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guerrilleros but I didn't believe him. Now we'll tell everyone what you had to say, and we'll show them these papers, and they'll know we're telling the truth!"

The *guerrilleros* told them that they would return one day to talk to all the villagers and organize them. "We'll pass through again" and "we'll be back one day"—these are the words with which the men of the guerrilla force usually take their leave of each group of peasants, each village. They cannot say when they will return, primarily for security reasons but also because plans are constantly being changed, according to the demands of the situation. But they always return, sooner or later, to continue the task of organization.

The phrase "we'll be back one day" has immense importance. One of the *guerrilleros* told me:

> Once we were on the move and in a great hurry, trying to avoid a clash with the army. We told a peasant on the road that we'd return to the village one day to talk to all the villagers. About three months later we returned to the zone, and a *compañero* went to see the same peasant, to ask if it would be safe for us to enter the village. He received our scout with unconcealed joy. He was with two other peasants and he said to them: "You see? The guerrillas are here!" Later he told us, "I knew you'd return because you said you would. They told me you wouldn't keep your word, but I insisted that *guerrilleros* do keep their word." He let the villagers know we were in the vicinity, and that night the entire village gathered, to discuss their problems with us. It was one of the best meetings we ever had.

The guerrilla force unites the peasantry. Unlike workers, peasants don't have the facilities to organize for concerted action; they are scattered, each one on his plot of land or in his village, surrounded by an enemy whose power is embodied in the army and other instrumentalities of repression. The guerrilla force, going from village to village, from region to region, is the embodiment of the common struggle and of the common aspirations of the peasants to possess the land. And there is a key fact to be remembered: the *guerrilleros* go with gun in hand. The peasants see in these rebel arms a symbol of their own traditional, unconquerable dignity.

When a guerrilla patrol passes through a village, it is not as a squad of armed men that they are welcomed but as

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the representatives of hundreds and hundreds of peasants of other villages; the patrol communicates the content of their many discussions throughout the province, brings the villages closer together by constant marches back and forth, and carries news and suggestions for action.

Often, after a guerrilla patrol has visited a village, the army will appear. They question, attack, burn, repress, in an attempt to extract information about the guerrillas. "We'll be back one day," the *guerrillero* says, in farewell. And that phrase provides each peasant with added strength to resist the repressions. They say to themselves: "Go ahead and strike at us; the *guerrilleros* will be back soon." Hence the jubilation when the first one quietly steals into the village and makes contact with the inhabitants: "They're back! We knew they'd be back!" Then comes the meeting, and the accounts of what has happened since the last visit, the exchange of experiences and ideas about how to carry on the struggle for the land.

All throughout the Northeast the guerrilla force is becoming more and more a part of the peasant's life, an increasingly important part, like the ground under his feet and the air he breathes. And the importance is due to the fact that the guerrilla gives the peasant a glimpse of his own future.

In one of the villages where the guerrilla force was already solidly rooted, a meeting was held, where many of the group were present. Except for certain patrols who were in the field on missions, most of the men in the unit, *Alejandro de León Frente,* were present, together with their commander, Antonio Yon Sosa. One of the *compañeros* gave a talk on the Cuban Revolution. The camp site was somewhat removed from the village, but soon peasants began arriving: men, women, children—*patojos* [waddlers], as they're called in Guatemala—and old people. Their presence seemed the most natural thing in the world, and they also seemed to consider our presence not as a novelty but as a normal element of their everyday lives. A grizzled old peasant, his face deeply lined and weathered from years of work and exposure to the sun, was standing near me. I asked him if he were from the village. "I'm a *guerrillero,*" he told me proudly, showing me the gun at his side. "I'm from another village. One day the army came and tried to force

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new controls on us; they took several prisoners and were hunting down others, accusing them of collaborating with the guerrillas. They burned my hut down to the ground but I escaped and joined up with the guerrilla force. I'm not so young, but I can still fight as well as the next man."

The next day the patrol left the village. "We'll be back one day. . . . Take care of yourselves," the commander told the villagers before leaving. And the answer came back: "We'll be waiting for you. And you take care of yourselves, too."

We did go back, several weeks later. As we approached, we noticed certain familiar clues that indicated that the army had been there not long before. Three of our men slipped into the village; one came back, his lips tight with rage and his eyes full of tears. "There's nobody there anymore. They've burned the village, those bastards," he said. We entered the village and looked around us. There were some charred huts; nothing else remained. And there wasn't a person in sight. But a few peasants who had taken refuge on a nearby hill had, it seems, observed our arrival and hastened to greet us. One of them told the commander what had happened. An army detachment had marched into the village the day after we left. They'd snooped around, asked everybody questions. Naturally they'd asked about our patrol. It appeared that nobody in the community had seen us; in fact, no one had ever seen a *guerrillero* in the flesh!

A few days later the detachment was back again. This time they burned huts, beat two of the local men, took others prisoners. The rest of the people fled. "It's not the first time we've had to hide in the hills," they told us. "It doesn't matter. We'll return, no matter how many times they drive us out."

That night our patrol camped on the outskirts of the village. The same peasant gave us more details of the village's encounter with the army. He was, in fact, a *miliciano* [member of the militia], who cultivated his land until such times as he and his gun were needed for a particular guerrilla action. He said:

Just listen to this, Commander! People were saying you'd gone to Cuba! After the soldiers were here, there was even a *señora* who insisted that she'd heard Fidel Castro and you in a radio

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broadcast! First he greeted you, she said, and then you spoke, saying that you were getting ready to return to Guatemala, and the [Azurdia] government should free all the prisoners, the ones in the city too, because if they didn't, you'd come with Cuban planes and take the capital!

Yon Sosa burst out laughing. "We'll, you see I did come back, but without planes, because I haven't been in Cuba! We've been here all along, spreading our message in other communities. But we'll have planes, don't you worry."

The next day when we struck camp we saw several families going back to their village. As we marched away they waved to us and shouted the usual words of the peasants' farewell to the *guerrilleros*: "We'll be seeing you, *compañeros*. Take care of yourselves."

IV. The Legend of the Guerrilla Force

The tale of the trip to Cuba is part of an unending legend that has grown up around the guerrilla force. We talked about it that night, half-jokingly. Evaristo, a *guerrillero,* said:

> The peasants don't invent a story "just because." The account of the Cuban trip was a way to defend themselves against the army while our patrol was away. True, the *guerrilleros* had gone away, the peasants said, but they'd be returning with weapons. That shows what the Guatemalan peasants expect of Cuba! And yet there are those who say that peasants don't understand the socialist revolution, that we must talk to them only about the land and democratic government! Actually, what they like about Cuba is the fact that it is socialist, that a workers' state exists there; and that's why they expect aid from Cuba and from no place else! They were very pleased with the story that the commander had gone to Cuba to appeal for reinforcements. I wonder what the OAS will have to say about these peasants who ask for "export of revolution" and for support from Fidel Castro's "communist regime!"

Legend converted into news and news converted into legend have spread all over the highland region. As in the Algerian and the Congolese revolutions—as in all revolutions, and especially in peasant wars—news and legend become weapons of struggle. They serve to strengthen the will to fight and resist pressures and attacks, to give support in adverse circumstances. They also serve to deceive, intimidate, demoralize,

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and undermine the army. No barrier separates the peasant from the soldiers; the soldier is really just a peasant in uniform, subject to military discipline. When the news-legend reaches him via the peasants, it spreads through the ranks, inducing the soldiers to see invincible guerrillas everywhere. News is always favorable to the guerrilla force and unfavorable to the army, and the government has imposed press and radio censorship in an attempt to avoid the filtering through of reports of guerrilla actions. For example, the Guatemalan dailies were forbidden to publish an interview given to several journalists by Yon Sosa, warning that such material would be considered "subversive." But peasants don't receive the papers and, in any case, most of them are illiterate. However, there is no way to censor the "grapevine" circulation of news, and the news is getting better every day.

Every action against the army is described as its overwhelming defeat. If two soldiers are killed in action, by the next day the figure has jumped to ten; the more remote the action in time and space, the greater the number of army casualties and the more disastrous the defeat at the hands of the guerrilla unit. But there is never total fabrication. A new report is always based on an actual armed clash; but in the telling, it grows and is elaborated. And thus it reaches soldiers in other units. The soldier-peasant believes the peasant version rather than the official version, since the latter emanates from the same commanding officers who abuse him; furthermore, he knows that it is false because officially the army never has casualties—yet he has seen his fellow soldiers fall in battle—and the guerrilla force allegedly always suffers losses, which he has never seen.

The guerrilla force is invulnerable—thus the legend. Just as the Congolese peasants claim that Gbenye and Soumailiot's *guerrilleros* spread an ointment on their bodies which makes them immune to bullets, Guatemalan peasants "protect" their *guerrilleros* with all sorts of imaginary, and sometimes real, sorcery.

The peasants believe that the men of the guerrilla force are never wounded; they are always accompanied by a "sage"—a wizard—who protects them from bullets. Others say that

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they have "chemistry"—that is, magic—and that is why the army cannot kill them.

They also say that Commander Yon Sosa, if he finds himself surrounded by the enemy, can take another shape and thus escape. When the situation is really critical, the legend has it that he turns into a bunch of bananas; the army marches past him and he overhears everything they say. One afternoon we returned to our encampment, dog-tired. We'd been on short rations for two days, and we weren't expecting food supplies until the next day. That morning we'd eaten the last provisions; all there was for supper, before bedding down, were two *tortillas* each, and some coffee. One of the *guerrilleros* said to Yon Sosa: "Look here, Commander, couldn't you turn into a bunch of bananas for a little while?"

A police sergeant told an imprisoned MR-13 member:

> It's impossible to nab that Yon Sosa. Just imagine, once we had him surrounded, him and all his group, in a house. There was a gun battle that lasted an hour. Suddenly he and his men stopped shooting. We waited. Silence. About half an hour passed. Then the door opened and a little black dog trotted out. You won't believe me, but it was Yon Sosa himself, escaping us disguised as a dog!

Another policeman told the same prisoner:

> The other day the Commander [Yon Sosa] was here. He came to visit the prisoners, disguised as a woman. When I saw him, he whispered to me: "Don't you dare let on that you recognize me." He spoke to the prisoners and left.

Legend is fused with religion, and witchcraft with the Bible. In a village the *guerrilleros* had entered for the first time, an old evangelist followed them around doggedly, Bible in hand, attempting to convert them. Meanwhile, one of the *guerrilleros* explained the movement's program to him. They had a long conversation on politics and religion and the old man's parting words were: "You have right on your side. You fight for justice and that's in the Bible. And the Bible has *guerrilleros,* too; the Maccabees were *guerrilleros,* just like you."

Later, Commander Turcios told me that there are many evangelists in the villages, and they always cite the Maccabees

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in explanation of their support for the *guerrilleros*. "Those Maccabees!" he said. "After all these centuries they've turned out to be magnificent allies for us!"

These are not mere anecdotes; they are proof that the guerrilla force has sunk its roots deep in the consciousness of the peasantry, for whom it is a symbol of hope. There is no power that can destroy these roots.

The army constitutes the only organism through which the government can impose its authority over the region. The army appoints two principal municipal authorities: the military commissioner and the assistant to the mayor. These posts are generally filled by peasants, who receive no remuneration. But, in many cases, influenced by their status and the possibility of using their office for personal advantage—such as extorting tribute from the community—the holders of these offices become agents of the army and the government, and enemies of the peasants.

However, neither the soldiers nor the municipal officials are separated from the peasants by a *cordon sanitaire*. On the contrary, they are obliged to live in continuous contact with them. The legends of the guerrilla force are magnified in the imaginations of the soldiers. Not once but many times there have been clashes between two army patrols, each of which has mistaken the other for a guerrilla patrol, resulting in losses for both groups. The peasants pass on the news of such episodes to the *guerrilleros*; in these cases the casualty figures are much more reliable than those reported for guerrilla ambushes of the army.

A peasant collaborator of the guerrillas came to our camp one day. He told us that on the previous Sunday he had stopped for a beer with the military commissioner of his village. "The area's full of *guerrilleros*," the commissioner told him. "You look around you, everyone looks so peaceable; but you never know how many of them are really *guerrilleros*. You can't ever be sure. Why, *you* might even be one of them." "What a thing to say!" the peasant replied, with simulated indignation. "Please don't be offended," the commissioner answered. "It was just an example. But it's a terrible situation. You can't be careful enough. Wherever you least expect to find them, they pop up."

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The peasants talk with the soldiers, try to influence them and raise doubts in their minds. In one village occupied by the army a peasant woman told us:

I struck up a conversation with a soldier who was off-duty. I asked him who are the armed men they are looking for? Are they foreigners? Had they tried to invade our country? I pretended not to know anything. The soldier said no, they are our countrymen and they are fighting for the land. There aren't many of them now, he told me, but in the end they're going to win, because everybody is for them.

This woman provided us with an excellent example of how demoralization is spreading among the troops. The soldier later told her:

People say that the *guerrilleros* all fight side by side, that they're all equals. But with us, it's the soldiers who're sent to the most dangerous posts, not the officers. We're always at the head or the rear of the column, where we're exposed to guerrilla gunfire. The officers always stay in the middle where it's safer.

Yon Sosa, in a newspaper interview, gave the following casualty figures for the two and one-half years the guerrillas had been in the field: army and police deaths, 142; *guerrillero* deaths in combat, 17. In spite of the military advantage for the guerrillas that these figures indicate, the army nonetheless has the advantage in materiel and numbers. In a straightforward military combat, it would be impossible for the guerrillas to defeat the army.

But no superiority of numbers or weapons can hold back the social disintegration of the army, challenged as it is by the guerrilla force and its peasant allies, who demoralize and influence the soldiers in myriad ways.

Both soldiers and officers of the army serve for relatively short tours of duty in the guerrilla zone as a means of combatting the influence of the peasants and the demoralization that spread throughout the ranks. This policy is double-edged, of course, because the soldier who is transferred takes back with him and spreads endless stories of guerrilla activities in the Northeast.

At an international football game, MR-13 distributed a leaflet to the Retalhuleu parachute battalion. The Guatemalan newspapers published a photograph of a youngster distributing

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the leaflets, and a soldier, surrounded by other soldiers, reading one of them. Here is the text of the leaflet:

Soldier: Refuse to fire against your peasant brothers. Refuse to burn down villages, refuse to torture!

Soldier: Turn your guns on those who plunder and persecute the peasantry. Our struggle is yours: it is the struggle for land and for a government of workers and peasants!

Soldier: Support the organization of peasant committees in the villages; organize, together with other soldiers, *underground committees in your barracks, garrisons, and posts,* to discuss how you can help the peasant and guerrilla struggle!

Soldier: Support land seizures by the peasants! The land belongs to him who tills it, not to the *latifundistas* or the United Fruit Company!

Soldier: Bring to trial those of your officers who have tortured and murdered your peasant brothers!

Soldier: Unite with the peasant guerrilla force, join the peasant militia!

Soldier: The *guerrilleros* are not your enemies! They are workers, students, and peasants who fight for the land.

Forward with the alliance of peasants, workers, and soldiers!

Forward in the struggle for the land, against peasant evictions, against military repression of the peasantry, and for the expropriation of the *latifundios*!

Workers, students, peasants, arm yourselves!

Revolutionary Movement of November 13th
Guatemala, 27 October 1964

V. Interview with a Guatemalan Guerrilla Leader*

I met Francisco Amado Granados, a guerrilla leader of the Revolutionary Movement of November 13th, "somewhere in Guatemala." The interview was held in an atmosphere of tranquility; we sipped cups of delicious Guatemalan coffee, sitting in a room flooded with sunlight. There was one visible detail which suggested the dramatic atmosphere of "normal" guerrilla life: a paperweight on the desk, within easy reach, which turned out to be not a paperweight but a hand grenade, in case of emergency. I queried Amado Granados about the present situation within the Peralta Azurdia regime:

*This interview took place during Adolfo Gilly's stay with the Guatemalan guerrillas in January and February, 1965.

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It's going through a tremendous crisis. Government leaders claim that they've imposed martial law because of our recent activities. That's only a pretext. They imposed it because of their own internal crisis. They're split into various factions, which arose from their weakness and lack of public support. When I speak of weakness I'm not saying that they don't have arms or money—imperialism provides them with both—or that the government will fall tomorrow. I mean that it has no social base; it is not supported by a single important social sector; it can't muster any real support anywhere inside the country. The farce of the Constituent Assembly has failed, and martial law is the proof. They've been repudiated by the entire population, and it's our job to organize that repudiation on a revolutionary basis and, through revolutionary action, to overturn the government.

Can you tell me something about the factions within the government?

There are several, but basically there are two positions. There is the one supported by Peralta Azurdia, based on an "institutional" solution to the situation. Toward that end he has rigged up a constitution that is ineffectual and worthless. He wants to hold elections and transmit power "constitutionally" to his hand-picked successor, through the device of a phony constitution. In other words, he is attempting to "legalize" the dictatorship.

The other faction understands that this farce deceives no one and appeals to no one; in fact, it weakens the regime. Consequently they want to extend the military dictatorship indefinitely, with no elections, not even phony ones, because the regime is so weak that it dare not hold even fake elections. This group maintains that any such move would play into the hands of our guerrilla movement and strengthen it. It therefore believes in toughening the dictatorship and carrying out a coup against Peralta himself.

Which faction imposed martial law?

As I see it, it's a compromise between the two groups, which enabled the pro-coup d'état people to impose certain conditions, though not all they hoped for. We of MR-13 are of the opinion that repression would be the same, with or without martial law.

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They are using it for settling differences among themselves, and for striking at the bourgeois and petty bourgeois sectors who were looking for a "democratic solution," pressuring the dictatorship to give them what they considered to be an approximation of a "democratic solution." This is the case of the URD (*Unión Revolucionaria Democrática*), whose leaders have been exiled or jailed. Nonetheless, the URD is not in favor of armed struggle, claiming the need for a peaceful solution, a peaceful revolution. They are among the penalized; they are paying the penalty for believing in a petty bourgeois utopia: a "peaceful" solution to dictatorship. Here there can be no peaceful solution, and there can be no elections.

But won't elections be held?

It doesn't matter whether they are or not, because the masses are excluded. Only the parties of those who are already in the administration are eligible to run. And now, even their activities have been suspended. We are opposed to elections and electoral illusions. Until capitalism is overturned, elections in Guatemala will be a monstrous farce.

Does MR-13 have support in urban areas?

Yes, widespread support. The people are with the *guerrilleros,* especially the students and the labor movement. The broad circulation of our newspaper is a gauge of our popular support, even though it is published and distributed clandestinely, and those found in possession of a copy are risking imprisonment, as well as the usual harassment and torture which constitute standard police methods under a dictatorship. We see evidence of it also in the thunderous applause which greets even the most passing reference to our *guerrilleros* on any public occasion. The guerrilla force is a focal point, a repository of political authority for the entire population of Guatemala. This is not due primarily to the admiration felt for the heroism of the *guerrilleros,* but to the people's identification with our armed revolutionary struggle. This fact signifies that they are preparing to participate *en masse,* and our job is to organize their participation. On February 20, in the heart of the city, one of our guerrilla patrols attacked a truck carrying army officers and soldiers. We blew it up, and the population responded with new evidence of their support. After their initial surprise,

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the people who witnessed our patrol's attack, helped to save our *compañeros*. Then they themselves had to escape, because the army was shooting wildly in all directions. As the people scattered they shouted: "Long live the *guerrilleros!*"

What was the purpose of the attack on the head of the United States military mission and the subsequent attack on the military convoy?

We issued a communiqué, as we always do after an action, explaining these attacks. We are not terrorists; we are against terrorism. We are revolutionary organizers, Marxists. When we carry out armed actions—terrorist actions, if you prefer to call them that—their purpose is to stimulate mass struggle, not to replace it. In the case of the attack on the chief of the military mission, our act constituted the response of the Guatemalan people to the criminal acts of *yanqui* imperialism in North and South Vietnam. Our dictatorship represses all mass demonstrations; even so, our attack on the military attaché had immense support. The Guatemalan people felt that, however small our country, we too had manifested our solidarity with the Vietnamese *compañeros* in their struggle against the imperialist aggressors. It was not the military attaché as an individual whom we attacked, it was his role. He came here to organize repression against the Guatemalan masses, just as his counterparts are doing in Vietnam. Our action had the added purpose of focussing the attention of the United States people on us—it was a way of appealing for their support in our struggle. The military attaché was a criminal, forming part of a team of criminals who are preparing, in the name of United States capitalism, a worldwide atomic war. They are dragging their own people toward such a war.

As for the attack on the military convoy, we have said and we reiterate that we are not against the soldiery; they are not our enemies. We appeal to them to organize and unite with the peasants and workers; and our appeal is heard. But in this case it was necessary to answer the continual raids carried out by the army in the Izabal mountains; they had burned huts and crops, persecuted and murdered peasants. The proof that the guerrilla force can inflict serious damage on the army on its home ground has been received with elation by the peasants;

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it has strengthened them in their resolve to resist the army and to move forward with the guerrilla force.

Members of your movement maintain that it is necessary to make a socialist revolution in Guatemala. The PGT (Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo, *the Communist Party of Guatemala*) *claims that what is needed is a democratic national revolution. What are the theoretical and practical implications of this divergency of opinion?*

Well, in the first place, there are differences in respect to the goal of the revolution and of revolutionary struggle; two distinct paths are being proposed. The PGT declares itself in favor of armed struggle; we are carrying out armed struggle. But armed struggle, though important, is a means. What is of real importance is the goal served by it. If it is used as a pressure device to force negotiations for the holding of elections for example, then armed struggle will fail, it will lose all value. But if armed struggle continues its development, it will ultimately find its own socialist goal. That's what has happened to us; it was our involvement in the armed struggle that led us to conclude that there was no other solution but the socialist revolution.

In the revolutionary struggle the goal determines the means. This is very simple. If the goal is a government of "national democracy," which no one has as yet defined—after all, Marxism recognizes only two kinds of states, in the present epoch, the bourgeois and the workers' state—then the means will be tailored to this goal. Such a government, it is said, would be made up of a four-class bloc: workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie. To begin with, there is no national bourgeoisie in Guatemala; furthermore, to specify the formation of this bloc as one's goal means to exclude all methods of revolutionary struggle appropriate to the working class. For example, it would be necessary to exclude as a method of struggle the revolutionary general strike, the occupation and workers' control of factories, the arming of the proletariat. All these methods, essentially revolutionary and not peaceful, would not be available to this suggested bloc. Such methods imply opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, foreign and domestic. To exclude methods proper

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to the working class would mean to limit the scope and effectiveness of the struggle; it would lead to defeat or to an impasse. The PGT and the Communist Parties that, in broad outline, follow Moscow's line rule out these methods, because the independent revolutionary mobilization of the working class destroys any prospect of a so-called "four-class bloc." But without independent revolutionary mobilization of the working class there can be no victorious revolution.

The goal of a socialist revolution, on the other hand, brings peasant struggle and peasant warfare closer to the proletarian struggle, putting them at the service of a single revolutionary goal, the overturn of capitalism and the taking of power by the masses.

If we are not in agreement on the goal, it then becomes difficult to agree on the means. However, since as the PGT also calls for a struggle against imperialism, we have publicly proposed to them and to other organizations that we form a united anti-imperialist front, based on concrete points of agreement, so that we may strike collectively against the imperialist enemy.

The PGT declares that the proletariat must exercise the leadership of such a bloc. We must, then, define "leadership." In all alliances it is not subjective interpretations that determine each group's role, it is the program. If the program is bourgeois, then the forces of the bourgeoisie will exercise leadership, however tenuous it may be. Lenin taught us this. If the proletariat is to assume leadership in any alliance, it must do so through its own program, or at least through an essential and decisive part of its program; the alliance must move in the direction of such a program, even though it may not adopt it completely. In Guatemala it is impossible to take even one step toward the revolution without a proletarian program. Such is the reality of the situation. And no bourgeois force will accept such a program. The one proposed by the PGT, for the purpose of "attracting" the purportedly "non-imperialist bourgeoisie" is a program of accommodation to the capitalist system, of reforms made within the framework of the system. We are against such a bloc; we are for the workers' and peasants' alliance, with a proletarian program and proletarian leadership.

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But does this mean that you reject all reform, all immediate democratic demands?

No, not at all. What we reject is the concept of the conquest of democracy for the people under the capitalist system. We don't separate our struggle for immediate demands from our struggle for power; our program of struggle includes a number of immediate demands. But at the same time we maintain that they can only be won through the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. And this mobilization, when it gets under way, will be carried by its own impetus beyond immediate demands and will move toward the struggle for power. Immediate demands unify large sectors of the population and mobilize them into action; but we must not limit ourselves to them nor create the illusion that the winning of such victories can be consolidated without further struggle. The advances must continue; otherwise the victories fade. The recent history of Latin America is proof of this, and we Guatemalans have had our own confirmation of this fact in the Arbenz experience and his subsequent overthrow. Therefore, we don't proclaim two separate goals—immediate demands on weekdays, and socialist revolution on Sundays. We consider them to be inseparably united. We don't have a minimal reformist program for today and a maximal revolutionary program for a distant future; we have a revolutionary program of transition, in which all immediate demands are inseparably linked to the struggle for the socialist revolution. On the basis of this program, we are establishing and we shall continue to establish united fronts with all organizations and parties that coincide with some points of our struggle, so long as we are not thereby limited to the joint program alone, but are permitted to move ahead simultaneously in the organizing of the socialist revolution.

What is the position of MR-13 on the Sino-Soviet conflict?

Our documents set forth our position. We don't share the attitude of those who claim that the conflict is irrelevant to us and that we must remain neutral. This subject is of concern to revolutionaries throughout the world; vital questions of revolutionary strategy are involved. We do not share the position of the Chinese *compañeros* in all aspects, but we think that their general revolutionary line of opposition to peaceful coexistence

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and peaceful transition serves to activate the revolution and can provide a basis for discussion and the regrouping of all revolutionary forces, proletarian and national, throughout the world, on the path of violent armed struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Such is our general opinion and we have therefore supported certain moves made by the Chinese *compañeros*, although there is no absolute identity of position.

What are the perspectives of the Guatemalan revolution in the near future?

Our revolution draws its strength not only from Guatemala but from the entire world. If it were merely a matter of our own forces, we would have been crushed already. Vietnam would also have been crushed. Yet, "they" have not been able to accomplish this, not only because of support given by socialist countries, but also because of the strength of the world revolution. It is no longer possible to measure the strength of a revolution in national terms alone; it must be measured in world terms. In every instance the relationship of world forces is reflected. We are part of a vast relationship of forces; we help to determine them, as they help to determine us. We exist within this context. It is in the light of these facts that we have opted for the goal of socialist revolution. We have in our favor the tremendous impetus of world revolution. This is also true for Zanzibar, for example. If it were not so, how could they have undertaken to do what they have done, on an island whose total population is less than that of Guatemala City? Our greatest problem is not the strength and arms of our enemies—although they are vast—but our need to create in our ranks a team of activists and leaders—workers, students, peasants—who will understand the situation thoroughly and how best to take advantage of it; who will see clearly the relation of forces; who will understand the nature of our tasks and will attack them with boldness. When you're really convinced that you're in the right, when you have confidence in your own strength as well as in the strength and understanding of the masses, you find that you possess a high degree of boldness. It is therefore our principal task now to organize and develop that confidence, through armed struggle and political struggles of all kinds. Confidence and boldness will be decisive to the course of the Guate-

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malan revolution in the near future, now that our movement is attracting the attention of the entire population. And we are firmly confident that our struggle, as we conceive it, and our program will soon create repercussions throughout Central America and arouse a responsive echo in other countries of Latin America.

VI. Appendix: Facts About Guatemala*

Area: 108,889 square kilometers, 60 percent of which is mountainous. (One square kilometer=.3861 square miles.)

Population: 4 million, or 36 per square kilometer.
Guatemala City, the capital, has a population of 350,000.
Rural population: 75 percent of the total.
Indian population: 54 percent of the total, speaking some 20 languages, the principal ones being Quiché, Kekchí, and Cachiquel.

Life expectancy: 43.6 years (38 years for the Indian; 49 years for the *ladino* [*mestizo* and white]).

Literacy: 27 percent, according to official figures, but actually closer to 20 percent.

Standard of living:
Average income: 151 *quetzales* (one *quetzal*=one dollar) per capita per annum.
Distribution: upper class average: 2,917 *quetzales*; middle class average: 580.6 *quetzales*; peasants and workers average: 87.7 *quetzales*.
The cost of living, according to UN statistics, is 10 percent higher than in the United States, whereas the average income is one seventeenth that of the United States. Only 25 percent of the population wear shoes.

Land distribution: 80 percent of the farm units cover only 10 percent of the total cultivatable area. There are 22 *fincas* with an acreage of approximately 22,000 each. They account for 13 percent of the total cultivated area and belong to three owners.
The best land is held by the *latifundistas*, some of whom leave 94 percent of their total acreage uncultivated.
Only 3 percent of the cultivated area is irrigated, and only 3 out of every 1,000 *fincas* use fertilizers. In 1960 there were 750 tractors in the entire country, 5,311 metal and 32,000 wooden plows, 6,500 ox-carts.

Exports: Coffee accounts for 75 percent of the total, bananas for 8 percent. Ninety percent of the total consists of unprocessed foodstuffs,

* Data based on: Luis Cardoza y Aragón, "Diez años de 'gloriosa victoria,'" in *Cuadernos Americanos*, Mexico, July-August 1964; and Mario Monteforte Toledo, *Guatemala: Monografía sociológica*, Mexico, 1960.

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much of which is later imported after processing abroad. Seventy percent of all foreign trade is with the United States.

Foreign investments: The United Fruit Company, including its subsidiary, the *Compañía Agrícola de Guatemala,* is the largest landowner in the country. Along with the other two big American companies—the *Empresa Eléctrica,* subsidiary of Electric Bond and Share, and the *Ferrocarriles Internacionales de Centro América*—United Fruit is exempt from taxes on its profits.

Forty-three percent of the country's railroads are owned by United Fruit; the rest are also owned by United States capital. They pay a 38 percent profits tax in the United States; in Guatemala they pay none. Puerto Barrios, Guatemala's most important port, is also controlled by United Fruit. Pan American controls 25 percent of the stock of *Aviateca,* the domestic airline. A hint of the profits earned by these investments is to be found in the figures on United Fruit profits—72 percent per annum on its total investment.

Only those under-developed countries led by revolutionary elites who have come up from the people can today allow the entry of the masses upon the scene of history. But, we must repeat, it is absolutely necessary to oppose vigorously and definitively the birth of a national bourgeoisie and a privileged caste. To educate the masses politically is to make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen. It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

A struggle which mobilises all classes of the people and which expresses their aims and their impatience, which is not afraid to count almost exclusively on the people's support, will of necessity triumph.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

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A LETTER FROM PRISON

BY WILLIAM McADOO

This article was written inside the New York City "Tombs" or Men's House of Detention, where the author had been remanded without bail, while awaiting sentencing on charges of criminal contempt. Mr. McAdoo, who is chairman of CERGE (see MR, January, 1965, inside back cover) and a leader of the Harlem Defense Council, was convicted along with four others on March 22, on several counts of criminal contempt of the 2nd August Grand Jury which is "investigating" the causes of last summer's Harlem "riots." The five jailed on March 22 have a total of eight children. The procedure of remanding persons to prison without bail, pending sentencing, on a misdemeanor charge, is unusual if not unique in New York law. The five received their sentences on April 5 and as we go to press they are still in jail, while their attorneys appeal the convictions. The five are: William McAdoo, David Douglas, Vivian Anderson, Nat Barnett, and Mike Crenovich.—*The Editors*

The sinister marriage between the 2nd August Grand Jury and the Bureau of Special Services of the New York Police Department, has provided the ruling class with an American-made scale model of Nazi "justice" machinery. The almost total cooperation of the mass media in maintaining a conspiracy of silence has provided nourishment for this prototype of the fascist "legal" process.

The 2nd August Grand Jury is receiving direct sponsorship from the federal government. Assistant District Attorney Joseph Philips has admitted in open court that the federal government is "interested" in the work of this Grand Jury, and it is a fact that the FBI and the Department of Justice are actively assisting the Grand Jury.

Contrary to the Fourteenth Amendment, the 2nd August Grand Jury was established with the systematic exclusion of Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and trade unionists. It is composed of rich, white individuals who are otherwise engaged in various capitalist enterprises (ten owners of corporations, four corporation executives, six well paid professionals). An all-white Grand

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Jury composed of members of a class which has grown fat from the misery of Negroes and Puerto Ricans, and who are fundamentally responsible for the ghetto conditions which result from their greed for profits, could not uphold the "equal protection" guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment without indicting themselves.

The 2nd August Grand Jury has run roughshod over the First Amendment rights of subpoenaed witnesses, by inquiring into matters of political belief and conscience. The witness cannot take the Fifth Amendment because the jury has promised him "immunity" from prosecution if he answers truthfully all questions. The rub here is that a cooperating witness has no guarantee that he will not be prosecuted by the *federal* government on a related charge. But because he has been offered this fake "immunity" the witness is forced to testify about his friends and associates—or go to jail on charges of either "civil" or "criminal" contempt or both. This is the institutionalization of informing.

Grand Jury proceedings are conducted in strict secrecy, behind closed doors, and the District Attorney is not obliged to inform a subpoenaed witness of either the subject under investigation or the ultimate purpose of the investigation. Lawyers are barred from accompanying witnesses, while they are being interrogated in the Grand Jury Chambers. This is an abridgment of the constitutional right to representation by counsel, especially since a witness may be charged with contempt, perjury, or fall victim to a subsequent federal indictment based upon testimony given before the Grand Jury.

The 2nd August Grand Jury has delegated its subpoena powers, carte blanche, to its police arm, the Bureau of Special Services (the so-called Red Squad). Bureau of Special Services detectives accost intended victims at demonstrations, on picket lines, at work or at home, whereupon subpoenas are immediately written up (in full view of all present) on blank forms, in much the same way that traffic cops dispense tickets.

Bureau of Special Services detectives have broken down doors, carried out midnight raids upon homes, and conducted searches without warrants—all contrary to our constitutional guarantees against illegal search and seizure. They have terrified

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and physically abused families, staged well-synchronized predawn arrests, maintained 24-hour surveillance over their victims, and made ample use of phone-tapping and the placing of wireless microphones in meeting places and homes.

This Grand Jury is the faithful servant of the rich. It has not called the slumlords to account, those same absentee landlords who force the people of Harlem to live in rathole tenements, while they rake in millions every year from exorbitant rents. The Grand Jury has not called the corrupt merchants of Harlem to account, those same merchants who rob the black people through exorbitant prices and installment plans. The Grand Jury has not called the profit-hungry industrialists to account, those same industrialists who use Harlem as a profitable, cheap-labor reserve and servants' quarters. Moreover, the Grand Jury has not called to account the police officials who are responsible for the beatings, shootings, and general reign of police terror in Harlem, the same police officials who are duty-bound to protect the landlords, merchants, and industrialists, by subduing and destroying all avenues of effective and constructive protest against ghetto life.

As early as May, 1964, the Harlem branch of the Progressive Labor Movement (PLM) warned the people of Harlem that the police department had embarked upon a campaign of terror and intimidation to prevent rent strikes, unemployment marches, school boycotts, and protests against mounting police brutality. In the spring, the Johnson administration in conjunction with the city's political bosses, made an arrangement with the "respectable" Negro leaders. One result of this arrangement was the well-publicized moratorium on protests and demonstrations.

Nevertheless, the ruling class was well aware that the black people of Harlem, who were suffering under the burden of worsening conditions, could not be so easily duped or mollified. Therefore police occupation of Harlem became a necessary precondition for successful containment of the black masses. In mid-April the Tactical Police Force ("riot squad") was brought into Harlem. This is a special unit of the New York City police with the kind of specialized training which makes it fair to compare it to the special forces now being employed by the

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government against the people of Vietnam. In addition, hundreds of policemen from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and elsewhere, were temporarily reassigned to Harlem for the duration of the projected period of occupation. These occupation forces engaged in obvious and well planned practice exercises, which were no more normal "police action" than is the United States war against the Vietnamese people. During certain phases of these practice exercises, various combat units (one hundred men to a unit) were marched, four abreast, down Lenox Avenue, or 125th Street. Upon arrival at appointed destinations, they stood at attention until each man was dispatched to an assigned position in the neighborhoods by the police officers in command. Hundreds of policemen were concentrated in various police precincts, public buildings, parks, and wherever tactically feasible. At various times, other policemen assumed tactical practice positions on tenement rooftops and in subway entrances. The fire department also participated in these almost daily practice exercises.

These movements alarmed the people of Harlem. The anger of Harlem residents began to mount in direct proportion to the intensification of police terror. More than 300 cases of police brutality were reported to the Harlem Defense Council during the period of April 17 to July 18, on which day the "riots" began.

During these same three months, the New York press launched a relentless campaign of race hatred and vilification. Fantastic stories about non-existent Negro hate gangs (for example, the alleged "Blood Brothers") were concocted by the news media, at the instigation of the Bureau of Special Services. These gangs were supposedly out for "white blood." Almost every news report on the alleged Negro hate gangs, clearly identified the Bureau of Special Services as the source of the "reliable" information for these fraudulent stories. The hate stories were designed to stir up anti-Negro feelings among the white population and to serve as a screen behind which the police carried out their vicious campaign of terror in Harlem.

The murder of James Powell, a 15-year-old Negro schoolboy by Police Officer Thomas Gilligan (July 16), and the bloody suppression of a peaceful demonstration in protest against his

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murder, signaled the beginning of a three-day police pogrom in Harlem. The police department's master plan was put into operation. If the Bureau of Special Services roughly corresponds to the Gestapo, then, New York's Tactical Police Force, due to its performance during the riots, has more than earned its place as the American version of the hated Nazi SS Elite Guard.

Apparently, none of the real facts concerning the Harlem "riots" are of interest to the 2nd August Grand Jury. Under the guise of investigating the "riots," this Grand Jury has already threatened to swallow up more than 40 people and to destroy three organizations. The roll call of its victims grows with every passing week. Most of these victims will serve months in prison, with heavy fines, on charges of "criminal contempt" for refusing to dignify this illegal inquisition. (Many are already in prison.) The Progressive Labor Movement, the May 2nd Movement, and the Harlem Defense Council, have so far borne the brunt of this inquisition.

A vile precedent is being established in New York City. If the 2nd August Grand Jury is allowed to succeed, other grand juries in combination with other "Red Squads" will become operative in other cities throughout the country. This new scourge may spread like gangrene, wherever firm voices of dissent threaten the plans of Lyndon B. Goldwater and his Big Business government. We have already witnessed a prototype of the administration's new "law" and we cannot help but see the development of its new "order" in this country. We are being treated to a bird's-eye view of the President's "Great Society."

Remember, that there were many (including liberals) who stood by silently when Hitler began with the open persecution of Communists, and continued with the elimination of trade unions and all political opposition (including liberals), in preparation for the establishment of his "new order."

We cannot afford to wait for the denouement of the present hateful drama which is rampaging in New York City. This ugly play must meet an early rebuff. We must all stand up! Speak out! And fight back! Now!

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SOUTH VIETNAM: SOME PERSPECTIVES

BY KEITH BUCHANAN

These notes are being written in Cambodia, in March, 1965. Bangkok airport as I passed through was shrill with American jet-fighters; on the observation deck of the airport a small group of United States officers was watching the planes disappear into the heat-hazed skies of late spring. The atmosphere is heavy and the voices of the Thai air-hostesses tense; soon the storms of summer will sweep across Southeast Asia. Beyond the eastern frontier of Cambodia, the United States is steadily escalating the South Vietnamese war; massive air attacks against targets north of the 17th parallel are under way. In Phnom Penh the Indochinese Peoples' Congress, uniting all those fighting against the new imperialism in South Vietnam—Buddhist and Catholic clergy, representatives of the Liberation Front, of tribal peoples, of Vietnamese residing in France or Cambodia—is in session; its members include also representatives of the Pathet Lao, of Cambodia, and of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam. It is paradoxical, but here at the center of the storm, the issues seem clearer than they seemed in Britain a few weeks earlier; the entire situation suddenly slips sharply into focus.

One is first of all suddenly acutely aware of the global perspectives of the South Vietnamese war. This tortured sliver of mountain and paddy fields is the easternmost extension of the Third World; it is margined on the north and west by countries of the socialist bloc; it juts eastwards towards the new American empire which takes in the wide spaces of the Pacific and the belt of island bases—the Philippines, Taiwan, Okinawa, and Japan—from which a permanent military threat is mounted against the Asian socialist countries. Given the obsessive Ameri-

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Keith Buchanan teaches geography at Victory University, Wellington, New Zealand, and writes frequently for MR.

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can fear of the Asian socialist states, given the new American awareness that the damned and dispossessed of the Third World are awakening to a new consciousness of their power, there is a quality of geopolitical predestination about the long nightmare of the South Vietnamese.

One is acutely aware, as one moves around, of this long nightmare—that the war is the continuation of a twenty-year struggle by the people of South Vietnam to assert their dignity as human beings. As a teacher, I suddenly realize that every child in Vietnam, that many who are as old as the students I teach in New Zealand, that maybe some of these participants in the Congress, have never known their country at peace. As a European I marvel at the gentleness and the warmth with which I am received by these warm and gentle people in Southeast Asia, for I read in their newspapers—and they read too—of the increasing barbarism with which people of my skin color are seeking to impose their will on these lands; each morning I open my Cambodian newspaper to read fresh examples of what Graham Greene has termed our "long slow slide into barbarism." I carry my mind back to my student days when the techniques of terror were being perfected by Hitler's dive-bombers over Guernica; as I talk with Cambodians and with Frenchmen about the use by the Americans of toxic chemicals, defoliants, napalm, and the techniques of "special warfare," there seems a chill and horrifying similarity between Spain of the 1930's and South Vietnam of the 1960's, for these latest experiments seem as deliberately designed to perfect the techniques of smashing peasant revolts and national liberation movements all over the world as were the German experiments to bring all Europe under the Nazi heel.

And, as the days go by, as one listens, reads, and talks, one becomes increasingly conscious that the struggle in the rice fields and on the high plateau of Vietnam is not simply a struggle waged so that 16 million Vietnamese may live in peace and dignity; it is much more, and those who fight are aware of this. It is a struggle whose outcome may determine the fate of the whole of the Third World of 2,000 million people for the next decade, possibly the next generation. It is a struggle whose historical importance has been re-emphasized, has been increased

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out of all proportion to the successes achieved by the National Liberation Front, with each setback to the cause of freedom and human dignity in other parts of the Third World. And, while we can have no place for pessimism in our long-term vision, it is important that we should recognize the reality of these setbacks: the counter-revolution in Brazil, the carefully contrived displacement of the PPP government in British Guiana, the disarray presented by the new African governments as a result of carefully fomented divergences, the ambivalent attitude of the USSR as far as the various national liberation movements are concerned. It is against this somber backdrop that the global significance, the relevance to all humanity of the South Vietnam struggle is to be evaluated.

It is a sad truth that many on the Left (and especially the European Left) seem little aware of the new sophistication, the new subtlety of the new colonialist-imperialist forces as represented by the United States. For along with the arrogant belief that mere masses of materials, of men, and of money will gain the day, there is also an increasing subtlety which in South Vietnam shows itself in the manipulation of a complex socio-political situation—the use of the powerful religious sects, the use of the tribal peoples, the use of Filipino and Chinese mercenaries or special agents, the projected use of the Mekong project for ensuring a United Nations (which effectively will be a United States) presence in the Indochinese lands. In the Congo a calculated humanitarianism is used as a pretext for intervention; in Latin America the comic book becomes an anti-socialist weapon; in Tanzania the unforgivable happens and some Embassy officials are hurriedly repatriated. And here in Southeast Asia one becomes depressingly aware that the European Left as a whole has not integrated these changes into their global viewpoint; this viewpoint is still largely that of the 1930's (though perhaps lacking the dedicated idealism of that period), and as far as colonial strategy and the national liberation movements are concerned it is too crude, too Europocentric to confront the new realities. It is helpless in the face of the new strategies being elaborated with such success by the successors of the old colonial powers—the CIA and the Pentagon—and being applied so effectively at the sensitive pressure points of the

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Third World: Brazil, the Congo, Vietnam. These in truth are the key areas from which whole continents can be swayed.

One becomes aware, too, of other implications of the struggle in Vietnam. As early as 1963 certain correspondents pointed out that the scale of the American arms build-up in South Vietnam could not be explained solely in terms of the South Vietnamese situation, that it seemed to be related to a much bigger strategy. Here in Southeast Asia it is increasingly clear that this strategy aims at the destruction of the Asian socialist regimes. The carefully escalated war against North Vietnam has thus a double purpose: either to provoke the Chinese Peoples' Republic into intervention and thus provide the United States with an excuse for a retaliation which could set back Chinese development for a generation or, secondly, in the absence of any Chinese action, to discredit China in the eyes of the Third World and thus to undermine the strong pro-Chinese tendency in the world Communist movement.

It is, indeed, only in the light of this obsessive preoccupation with the destruction of the Asian socialist regimes that we can understand the American power elite's insistence, in the face of the virtually unanimous opinion of French journalists (perhaps the best informed of all writers on the problem), that the mainspring of the war is in Hanoi and Peking. "We prefer," said one spokesman of the Liberation Front to Georges Chaffard, "to settle our affairs among 'southerners'. . . . We have not struggled for years to replace one dictatorship by another. No one among us can admit a state of dependence on the North."* This "grassroots," autonomous, character of the F.L.N. is insisted on by Jean Lacouture. "The U.S. Air Force and General Ky can bomb beyond the 17th parallel . . . but that will scarcely alter the course of the war. The Vietcong will still recruit as many young peasants and the nationalist army will still lose as many weapons to the benefit of its opponents. . . ."** The testimony is clear, it is based on meticulous on-the-spot investigation, yet its implications are studiously ignored—for to

* Quoted by J. Lacouture in "L'engrenage de la guerre" in *Le Nouvel Observateur,* Feb. 18, 1965, p. 4.

** *Ibid.*

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those who frame American policy the South Vietnam war is only a means to an end. *Delenda est Carthago. . . .*

As events in Southeast Asia move to a climax, as the fate of two thirds of mankind hangs in the balance, there seem three rays of light only. First, the ultimate impossibility of defeating a peasant people in arms. They may be destroyed—and in the last resort the West may not shrink from virtual genocide—but they cannot be defeated as a people. Secondly, the possibility, the remote possibility, that internal economic weaknesses and contradictions in the West may give the peoples of the non-Western world a breathing space. Thirdly, that the pressure of world public opinion may, before the hour is too late, dissuade the high and mighty of the globe from taking those last few steps which will precipitate mankind into a vast racial conflict; that pressure may perhaps persuade them to listen to the voices of those, such as the folk working at the Indochinese Peoples' Congress meeting here in Phnom Penh as I write, who belong to the small and defenseless nations being destroyed by the power-mad, insecurity-ridden folly of the great. In this moment of decision the role of the USSR, so ambiguous it seems to people here in Asia, is as important as that of its fellow giant the U.S.A.

Postscript

The Americans are using a new horror weapon in Vietnam which they call the "lazy dog," reports the London *Daily Mirror.*

It explodes 30 ft. above ground level, spitting out tens of thousands of razor-sharp steel slivers which slice through walls, roofs and humans.

"It makes mincemeat of everything. Nothing lives after it goes off," the newspaper said.

Americans told *Daily Mirror* reporter Donald Wise that the lazy dog "takes out a whole city block."

Wise said: "Bombers cannot always be choosers. Civilians too have been cut to pieces by the bombs."

One American told him: "We have written off this generation of Vietnamese. The Viet Cong have got them.

"We hope to get the next lot back on our side with the bombing.

"It is the new way to fight a peasant enemy. We will make him howl for mercy with sophisticated weapons he can't afford."

Reported in the New Zealand press, March 25th.

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WORLD EVENTS

By Scott Nearing

The Struggle for Civil Rights

Returning to New York after five months of traveling, observing, and speaking from Maine to Florida; from Florida to Texas to California; up through Oregon to Washington and back again to the North Atlantic seaboard—I find myself summing up the state of mind through the nation in one word: *confusion*. Confusion reigns in Washington as it reigns among people who cull their information from headlines and newscasts. It is rampant among assembly-line workers and farmers; among self-styled intellectuals and city sophisticates; among youth, adults, and senior citizens.

Confusion eddies and whirls about two major foci: the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, although it has minor centers, such as revolt on the campus; the dwindling gold reserve; General de Gaulle's latest anti-American move; the ideological rift between Russian and Chinese Communists; the frustrating financial difficulties of the United Nations; and the struggle to control the Congo.

Our national confusion was most clearly evident in the tone and tempo of President Johnson's civil rights speech to the nation on Monday, March 15. It was equally apparent in the torrents of applause with which the high-level official audience assembled in the Capitol greeted the speech.

President Johnson reduced the complicated civil rights issue to one simple proposition: all American citizens, regardless of race, color, or creed have the right to register and to vote. In ringing phrases and amidst standing ovations, the President repeated and reiterated this proposition and pledged his administration to put into practice the principle of universal adult suffrage. This proposition has been accepted in theory by most

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citizens of the United States and of the Western world for at least a hundred years. President Johnson announced it as though it were a discovery of his administration. His audience cheered it as though they were listening to a Fourth of July oration for the first time.

The political promise they applauded so fervently was just a proposal to enforce provisions long since written into the Constitution and implemented by existing legislation. However, it was promulgated on March 15th to a public plagued by security clearances and hounded by secret police (the FBI); a public spied upon by the latest electronic devices, pushed around by snooping legislative committees, and consistently misinformed and uninformed through the channels of public information. No wonder they applauded a political promise that rights, guaranteed by the Constitution and spelled out in legislative enactments, are to be safeguarded by the executive branch of government.

Heated discussions are being held all across the country concerning the nature of the civil rights movement. Does it involve reform, or is it really a revolution? The answer is obvious. The civil rights movement was a phase of the 18th-century revolutions in North America and France, and of the European revolutionary movements of the 1830's, 1840's, and 1870's. It is a reform long overdue in 1965 Alabama and Mississippi.

One semantic question remains unanswered. From the standpoint of Negroes living in Montgomery or Selma, is not the demand to register and vote a revolutionary demand? In a very limited sense the answer is "Yes"—from the standpoint of Negroes who have been denied those rights. For the United States as a nation and people, the demand for civil rights, constitutionally guaranteed, enjoyed by the citizenry at large, and denied to a particular group, cannot be called revolutionary. Rather it is an administrative reform. If this right is being restricted by fraud or violence, the local constable or sheriff or a federal marshal should intervene as a matter of routine law enforcement. It would have helped to clear the air if President Johnson had said as much in his March 15th address to the Congress and to the nation.

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Light on Vietnam

If mists and fogs of confusion obscure problems in the field of civil rights, the Vietnamese War is blacked out by Washington's official refusals (1) to state the reasons for the presence of United States armed forces in Vietnam; (2) to report the scope of military operations; (3) to submit the issues to the Geneva Conference authority or the United Nations; or (4) to negotiate with the parties involved in the conflict. Like a bull in a china shop, Washington continues to smash the tableware without apparent rhyme or reason. After the middle of March, the Johnson administration refused even to publicize major assaults directed against North Vietnam. United States citizens remain confused and mystified about the Vietnamese War.

President Johnson's statement that Washington's purpose in Vietnam is "the defense and protection of freedom of a brave people who are under attack" is belied by several relevant facts:

(1) United States conquest of the Philippines from 1898 to 1901 involved the expulsion of Spanish authority, the defeat of the Filipino independence forces under General Aguinaldo, and the establishment of United States military bases in the Philippines to ensure "freedom" there. United States military occupation of the Philippines has continued through the ensuing 64 years.

(2) Pacific islands, mandated to Japan by the League of Nations, were fortified by Japan in violation of their mandate. The islands were "liberated" by United States forces from 1941 to 1945. Their fortifications have been strengthened and the islands today are part of the military network that gives Washington substantial control of the Pacific Ocean.

(3) The Japanese archipelago, taken over militarily by United States forces after the unconditional surrender of Japan in August 1945, is occupied by a series of United States military bases and constitutes part of the United States-controlled island chain from Alaska to Singapore.

(4) The Japanese island of Okinawa, under lease to the United States, is described by United States authorities

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as the most strongly fortified area in the Pacific region. It is also part of the island chain along the shoreline of East Asia.

(5) The Chinese island of Taiwan, described by General McArthur as "an unsinkable aircraft carrier," pivot of the island chain stretching from Alaska to Singapore, was occupied by United States armed forces in 1950 and has been converted into a strongly fortified United States military establishment.

(6) South Korea, "liberated" by the United States from Japanese control in 1945, has been converted into a military stronghold occupied by three American divisions. South Korea is one of two considerable parts of the Asian mainland presently held by a Western power.

(7) Southeast Asia is the second mainland area under Western occupation. French imperialists held Indo-China until they were driven out by the victorious Vietminh forces in 1954. Under the Fourteen Nation Geneva Agreements of 1954, foreign troops were to be excluded from the area, which was to be "neutralized." Using diplomatic and economic pressures, Washington began moving into Indo-China before the ink was dry on the Geneva Agreements. Presently, the United States Seventh Fleet, with its powerful air arm, occupies Indo-Chinese waters and air space. United States military personnel in the area numbers around 30,000. United States helicopters, jet planes, and other military hardware are being used to wage a war against the popularly supported National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, and against the sovereign, socialist state of North Vietnam.

In all of these areas the United States military has been in occupation for anything from years to decades. In every case, once the United States armed forces are dug in, they stay. The declared purpose of these intrusions into East Asian waters and upon the East and Southeast Asian land mass during the past sixty years may have been the extension of "freedom." The practical consequence has been economic penetration, political domination, and permanent military occupation.

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Sauce for the Goose

United States policy-makers have spent the last two centuries asserting their right to regional independence and self-determination. Independence was affirmed in the Declaration of July 4, 1776. Self-determination for the United States in the Western Hemisphere was promulgated by Washington in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.

Stated in terms of the present confrontation across the Pacific, United States independence and self-determination would imply that Washington could not tolerate the continued presence of Asian military forces on the North American mainland or its approaches.

If this statement of independence and self-determination is founded on accepted international principles, reciprocity would seem to demand that it should be applicable equally to the scene of so much controversy and turmoil in South and East Asia. A rewording for that purpose would make the statement read: Peking cannot tolerate the presence of American military forces on the South and East Asian mainland or its approaches.

Although the Asian position may not have been stated in exactly those phrases, there are many indications that the words express the feelings of increasing numbers of South and East Asian peoples, such as the Vietnamese.

South Vietnam's Liberation Front has repeatedly stated that the first item in the terms of settlement for the Vietnam War is the withdrawal of *all* foreign armed forces from the territory of South Vietnam.

Similarly, Peoples' China demands that foreign forces be withdrawn from Taiwan and the adjacent islands.

Indonesia's exit from the United Nations was prompted by the large build-up of British arms in its puppet state of Malaysia.

Unrest is growing in the Philippines because of repeated incidents arising from the United States military bases in the islands.

Korean students are agitating for the withdrawal of all United States armed forces from South Korea.

Okinawa, described as "the main United States staging area in the far Pacific," is demanding the exclusion of United States

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armed forces from the island and the return of the territory to Japan, of which it is legally a part.

If, as the President has asserted, the Washington administration truly desires to promote peaceful relations with the peoples of Asia, it should announce and implement a policy of complete withdrawal of all United States armed forces from land, water, and air bases in South and East Asia.

Epitaph for Winston Churchill: "He Was Wrong"

Winston Churchill, in his speech at Fulton, Missouri, on March 6, 1946, insisted that if Britain and the United States stood together they and their supporters would prevail: first, over the remnants of their defeated capitalist opposition and, later, over the battered socialist enemy. He was wrong.

He seems to have had no idea of the destructive contradictions implicit in a competitive, acquisitive, exploitative, expansive economy, housed in rival bourgeois states and empires.

He must have been equally unaware of the gross violations of social justice, and the irremediable social wounds inflicted by colonial conquest and the unremitting survival conflicts between rival empire builders.

Hence he could not accept the proposition that the concentration of capitalist wealth and power in Western and Central Europe was an increasing threat to world peace and a growing menace to the happiness and even to the survival of a great majority of mankind.

Winston Churchill in his approach to world problems was not only wrong, but persistently and pugnaciously wrong. So wrong was he that as Prime Minister, he actually presided over some of the most important stages in the liquidation of the British Empire.

Winston Churchill believed in the virtues of capitalism and was blind to its self-destructive vices. He never realized that a more workable pattern of social life was just around the historical corner.

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BOOKS

ACROSS THE RIVER IN SOUTH VIETNAM

BY HUGH DEANE

Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War, by Wilfred G. Burchett, International Publishers, New York, 1965, $4.95.

The State Department's Blue Book and White Paper and the speeches of McNamara and Rusk stick with the fairy tale that Hanoi could not abide the growing prosperity of free South Vietnam and signaled a war of terror in desperation. But on occasion publications just outside the official circle have ventured in the direction of the truth. In an article "South Vietnam Finds Itself" in *Foreign Affairs,* January 1957, William Henderson acknowledged that the Communists had enjoyed "considerable support, or at least acquiescence" in the south but he also detected "a wholly unexpected political miracle." This is the miracle-in-the-making:

As the Diem regime waxed in strength and confidence, it gave increasing attention to rooting out the Communist danger. All the techniques of political and psychological warfare, as well as pacification campaigns involving military operations, have been brought to bear against the underground. . . . It is clear that the usual democratic safeguards have not always been upheld. The consensus is that this all-out effort has been reasonably effective.

Wilfred G. Burchett's new book gives the first detailed account in English of the realities behind this remote and smug phraseology. A reporter with a solid background in war and Southeast Asia, Burchett spent six months in the territory of the National Liberation Front in 1963-1964. His book is a partisan but straightforwardly written narrative, with photos, of what he saw and was told. An epilogue sums up his return trip last winter, reported more fully in a series of articles in the *National Guardian.*

Hugh Deane was a reporter in China, Japan, and elsewhere in Asia for many years. He is the author of the Monthly Review Press Pamphlet, "The War in Vietnam," published in 1963.

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Burchett interviewed people of all sorts, peasants, intellectuals, cadres, members of the minority tribes, district and national leaders of the NFL, and wherever he went he asked how it had all begun. Their answers were the fragments of a mosaic: throughout South Vietnam, most of which was under the control or influence of the Vietminh at the end of the French war, counter-revolutionary terror began as soon as the 140,000 Vietminh regulars were transferred north in accordance with Geneva; the few cadres who survived the terror and new leaders created in stress rallied a people who had won one war to fight another. This is an NFL district leader's description of a "denounce-Communists" campaign in Quang Ngai province (central Vietnam) in 1957:

It was a long drawn-out campaign that cut down many of our best resistance cadres and their families. Children of former resistance workers were banned from going to school; wives of those regrouped to the north were forced to divorce and then remarry. . . . Land which had been distributed under the resistance . . . was taken back and given to former landlords. . . . Mutual aid teams set up to help those families which were short of manpower were dissolved. Thousands . . . were rounded up and sent off to the so-called "agricultural settlements" in the mountains. . . . At Quang Ngai provincial capital, 6,000 were held permanently, many were shipped off to Poulo Condor and other prisons; there were new jails set up at district and village levels. Every arrest was synonymous with barbarous tortures—this was an absolute rule. Even if an arrested person was ready to . . . cooperate from the first moment, he could not escape the preliminary torture.

During the French war the Vietminh distributed 500,000 hectares of land in the south belonging to collaborating landlords; all but 15 percent was taken back by the Diem regime, even as its American adviser, Wolf Ladejinsky, was concocting a so-called "agrarian reform." During the last six months of 1959, on the eve of the war, two Diem divisions burned 200 hamlets in one province; in one mountain district one out of every nine persons was killed or imprisoned. On May 18, 1960, NFL terrorists assassinated a leading secret police agent in central Vietnam; they found 432 ears in his drawer, each representing a victim of the executioners.

The French historian Philippe Devillers wrote in his oftenquoted "The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam" (*China Quarterly* January-March, 1962), that the insurrection began in the south before the Communists organizationally decided on it and before the leadership in Hanoi believed it was opportune. Some supporting evidence and hints are to be found in Burchett's account. The first armed action in central Viet-

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nam was taken by the Kor minority in January, 1959, against the advice of the cadres. A year later partisans seized Tua Hai fortress, near Tay Ninh town, capturing the pilot nucleus of arms for the rebellion. The cadre in command feared he and the others might be reprimanded. The action was eventually approved, but "we were worried for some weeks after the battle," he told Burchett.

One Vietnam war is over—the "special" or "counter-insurgency" war which bemused Kennedy, an avid fan of James Bond as well as reader of Marlborough, and excited a Pentagon which had been assigned the task of suppressing revolutions without breaking up everything. The Taylor-Staley plan of 1961 expressed the theory in Vietnam. Now its co-author has been stung by defeat into advocacy of relentless escalation.

The error of the French was supposed to have been that they failed to make pivotal use of the native rightists. Now both Diem, Asia's Winston Churchill to LBJ, and much of his apparatus of terror are gone. The Saigon regime verges on nonexistence. The strategic hamlets that were supposed to drain off the water so the fish could be caught have been largely razed. Civic action? The young American innocents sent to perform minor benevolences in a token number of villages were long ago psychologically obliterated. The Saigon army has turned out to be largely bodies in uniform—a non-army. Its elite SS-type units, the Rangers, have been badly cut up and its lack of a central reserve (the ratio to the "Vietcong" is down to four or five to one) has sharply reduced the frequency of the "kill and burn" sweeps. On the ground the U.S.-Saigon position consists of strong points which are encircled and increasingly dependent on supply from the air.

How did all this come about? A number of able American reporters—notably Homer Bigart and David Halberstam of the *New York Times*—have given us a good deal of the answer. But they were on the other side, ideologically as well as physically. By crossing the river Burchett has added vastly to their carefully phrased paragraphs.

Like Hanoi and the NFL itself, Burchett does not admit to any aid from North to South. The northern counter-intervention in the war has been minuscule compared to the arms, dollars, and men poured into the South by the United States, but it is certainly a fact —and one already essential to any assessment of the balance of forces. The American unification of Vietnam by bombings is bound to elicit a further response, however covert. Burchett quotes a 1962 statement by the NFL: If the American imperialists plunge deeper into South Vietnam, "the people of South Vietnam and the NFL will use their legitimate and effective right to appeal to the people and government of

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North Vietnam, to peace-loving . . . governments the world over . . . requesting that active support, including material and manpower support, be afforded."

Burchett makes plain that this war has been a terrible tug of war and one in which serious setbacks preceded the turning of the tide. The helicopters and strategic hamlets of 1962 brought the U.S.-Diem alliance initial victories; in mid-year the NFL debated whether to withdraw its regular formations from the Mekong Delta and fight from the mountains. Six months later the decisive victory at Ap Pac began the wresting of the initiative from General Hawkins' command.

The main truth to which everything Burchett saw and heard testified is that the South Vietnamese and tribal minorities have shaped political and military power with their own hands. "Living-integrated-with-the-enemy" tactics have encircled the U.S.-Saigon alliance politically even as "wipe-out-enemy - posts - and - annhiliate-reinforcement" tactics have denied it military control of the countryside. A new generation has been rallied to the slogans of an old revolution. Bit by bit, a myriad of small actions in many places, an orchestration of non-violent and violent weapons improvised by a vital and resourceful people—that is how it has been done.

Again the partisan version of the judo principle has been verified. The NFL soldiers Burchett saw walked on Goodyear rubber, wore a U.S. webbing belt and sometimes a shirt of U.S. camouflage nylon, carried flour-sack haversacks stamped "A Gift of the People of the USA," wrapped their rice ration in parachute nylon and carried a rich variety of U.S. weapons. Because the United States has trained more Vietnamese in warfare and brought in greater quantities of arms than the French did, the "Vietcong" is far better trained and carries heavier weapons than did its Vietminh predecessor. The arms factory Burchett visited was producing 15,000 grenades a month and sophisticated mines with machinery made by Portaweld-Onan, Minneapolis, and other American firms; the x-ray in a hospital was manufactured by Picker of Cleveland.

Vo Nguyen Giap once described the French war in terms of revolutionary stages and then added that "the reality on the battlefields unfolded in a more lively and complicated manner." Burchett's 245 pages of course do not capture the range of human complexities of the present war. Some day a Vietnamese Sholokhov will set it all down for us. But when all is told, the Vietnamese resistance to two counter-revolutions conducted by great Western powers will remain a great chapter in the struggle of mankind to get control of its society.

The rush of events since Burchett wrote his epilogue points to a new war in Vietnam—a "limited" war, the next in the

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scale, another theory for the war gamesters. In the air, where a handful of craftsmen can operate beyond the reach of people, the war has been intensified and taken to North Vietnam. On the ground, the first marines have debarked, with the usual disclaimer, this one being that they are there as base security forces. The dispatch of regular divisions is in the feeler-report stage. The introduction of a further range of weapons, including nuclear ones, is being discussed by commentators close to the Pentagon. And the possibilities long age reached to the "privileged sanctuaries" of China.

The widening of the war is likely to produce consequences as unforeseen by Washington as were those of the decision to set up the Diem regime in the wake of Dien Bien Phu. But the nub of the problem remains South Vietnam. The developments since early 1963 have been decisive. The small bands have grown into battalions and regiments; the archaic French and home-made rifles have become a made-in-America arsenal. By a year ago, according to Burchett, some 4,500 hamlets had been fortified; some 100,000 hours of work had been put into tunnel digging—the counterpoint to bombing from the air is burrowing in the earth. And politically the "contest for the loyalty of the people" the briefing officers still prate about is over. The facts—those in our press as well as the wealth of them Burchett gathered—lead to the conclusion of the book's final sentence: "Short of using the H-bomb and wiping out all Vietnamese and many of their neighbors, the Americans will never succeed in South Vietnam by trying to impose a military solution."

After a certain point, as everybody knows, quantity changes into quality. The bombardments [of North Vietnam] have given the war the Americans are waging there a new aspect. These bombings indicate an irreversible qualitative leap, insofar as they make brutally evident that American society as such has an imperialist base. . . .

[The Americans] tell me: Come and argue with us. But discussion is possible only with those who are ready to put in question the whole American imperialist policy—not only in Vietnam but in South America, in Korea, and in all the countries constituting a "third world"; moreover, discussion is possible only with those Americans who will concede that American policy cannot be changed short of a complete turnover of American society. . . .

The United States will evolve, of course, slowly, very slowly. And more, I think, if one resists it, than if one preaches to it.

—Jean-Paul Sartre, in "Why I Will Not Go to the United States," *The Nation,* April 19, 1965.

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A unique book on the civil rights struggle

Step by Step

by members of the Fayette County Project

Edited by Douglas Dowd and Mary Nichols

The aim of STEP BY STEP is not to demonstrate that the American Negro is being repressed – but to show, in precise detail, how those who would become involved in the civil rights movement can develop and work out a concrete project.

The book arose out of the authors' experiences in the Cornell-Tompkins Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Fayette County, Tennessee. The project entailed six to eight weeks of living in Fayette County by forty-five volunteers, most of them students from Cornell University, in the summer of 1964. The project's cost (an amount exceeding $15,000) was financed mainly by students, faculty and townspeople in and around Cornell.

STEP BY STEP describes and explains just how the project was carried out; it thus answers for every American interested in civil rights the often-asked question, "What can *I* do?" Included is a detailed appendix listing civil rights projects and organizations in desperate need of help, whether in terms of money or volunteers or both. Both authors and publishers are contributing their income from this book to the project.

With photographs by Nick Lawrence

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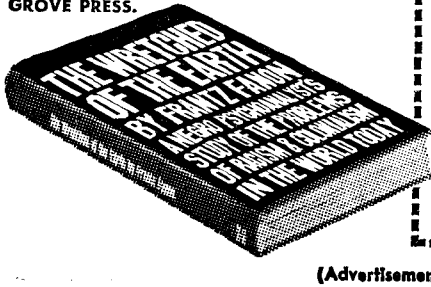
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sorption of economic surplus in the United States, stressing the interrelations between economic and socio-cultural developments. The tentative publication date is December, and the tentative list price is $8.75. Further details in later issues of MR.

(2) *The Drama of Latin America: The Case of Mexico* by Fernando Carmona. This broad survey of the economic and political problems of the Latin American countries, with Mexico as a case in point, is by one of the school of younger Mexican economists with a wide interest in the problems of Latin America as a whole. In 1959-1960, Professor Carmona was a member of the Mexican delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Tentative publication date is October, 1965, and tentative list price $6. Further details to follow.

(3) *The Timely Rain: Travels in New Tibet* by Stuart and Roma Gelder. The Foreword is by Edgar Snow who says that the book "is both news and history to enrich man's knowledge of revolutionary Tibet." Stunning color photographs both in color and in black and white make this an ideal gift book. Tentative publication date is October, the list price $8.95. Further details to follow.

You have probably never heard of the magazine *Choice*, but as a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries, it is of great importance in the publishing world since it is used by many libraries as a guide to the selection of books.

Of the 20,542 books published in 1964, *Choice* reviewed 3,397 and selected 297 of these as books which it thinks "no college library should overlook." *Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean* by Gordon K. Lewis, published by MR Press, is one of the books included on this select list. *Choice* said of *Puerto Rico*: " . . . A model of clarity and organization, it punctures any lingering romantic illusions about the actual progress of Puerto Rico, supposedly an island 'showcase of democracy,' which still suffers from political subordination, economic retardation, and cultural uncertainty after six decades of American benevolence."

Nearly all members of the staff of MR were in the March on Washington on April 17. We were happy to see so many MR readers there, too—and so many young people from all over the country. Hats off to Students for a Democratic Society and other groups which organized so heartwarming a demonstration for sanity and peace.

An MR Associate who contributed generously to last year's 15th Anniversary Fund for MR Press books for Negro college libraries has asked us whether it was possible to continue to provide the library to which his gift was sent with the new MR Press books as they are published. The answer is definitely yes. If you wish to adopt one or more Negro college libraries, MR Press will send them its new books as long as your contribution lasts, with or without using your name as donor. Send your check with instructions to MR Press.

In the past it has been our policy to answer personally all letters specifically addressed to one or the other of us, and all but routine business letters addressed to the magazine. Unfortunately we can no longer keep this up. The staff is small and chronically overworked, and many tasks which in a larger and more affluent enterprise would be delegated to others must be attended to by the editors. Under the circumstances and regrettably, we are going to have to adopt a more formal and impersonal method of answering a large part of our mail. We ask your understanding and indulgence.

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